

REEVALUATING AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY
IN AN ERA OF RETRENCHMENT

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The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the course of the last decade, the United States has experienced a slow decline both economically and politically. Conflicts in Southern Asia have overstretched the U.S. military in a time of declining economic prosperity. As rising regional powers emerge to challenge the status quo, America's global interests must be reexamined in order to establish a realistic grand strategy for the next century.

In order to thwart a rapid decline, defend its critical interests, and prevent potential conflict, the United States must enter a period of retrenchment. International commitments, military obligations, and existing alliances should be scrutinized in light of limited economic resources and declining prestige. This paper will review U.S. grand strategy and delineate realistic and palatable "retrenchment" options for the 21st century.



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Problem

It has been two decades since the end of the Cold War. After the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union, policymakers began searching for a tenable post-Cold War “grand strategy” that fit the new security environment.¹ As expected, a range of options were proposed that included everything from strict *isolationism* to hegemonic *primacy*.² Certainly this was not the first time that a shift in the international environment necessitated a change in U.S. grand strategy. However, the 1991 “shift” was different. America, as the sole surviving superpower, stood at the apex of its power. The untimely death of the Soviet Union, followed by the overwhelming military success of the Gulf War, ushered in a new world order. The viability of American economic, military, and political ideology was vindicated after 20 years of doubt. Almost by default, “*primacy*” became the overarching grand strategy of the United States.³

Since 1991, three different administrations have attempted to tweak and refine post-war grand strategy.⁴ In that time, these administrations have sent U.S. forces to fight in several wars, overthrow dictators, and capture terrorists. Meanwhile, the dynamics of global politics evolved and changed. Through it all, the United States held unparalleled hegemonic power. However, throughout the course of the last decade, the United States has experienced a gradual decline both economically and politically.⁵

¹ Christopher Layne, “Rethinking American Grand Strategy,” *World Policy Journal*, (Summer 1998): 8. Layne defines “grand strategy” simply as the “process by which a state matches ends and means in the pursuit of security.”

² Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 3-51. Posen and Ross present four possible post-Cold War Grand Strategies that include neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy. These “grand strategies” generally reflect the most likely follow-on strategies considered by policy-makers.

³ Anthony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement” (address, John Hopkins University, Washington D.C., 21 September, 1993). In his remarks, Anthony Lake advocates for not only “engaging” the international community, but “leading” it based on a policy of supporting democracy, expanding free markets, and advocating for humanitarian efforts. At its core, this strategy rests on what has been broadly been defined as “primacy.”

⁴ Barry Posen, “Stability and Change in U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Orbis*, (Fall 2007): 561-567. Posen point out that despite differences between the Clinton and Bush approach to national security, both administrations were committed to maintaining preeminence. The general idea behind “primacy” is that only U.S. power is capable of truly preserving international peace.

⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 155. Nye defines two types of decline: Absolute and relative decline. “Absolute decline” is associated with outright decay. “Relative decline” is when a rising power eclipses a status quo power due to higher growth rates, more resources, or greater efficiency. The United States is in “relative” decline.

American pride and prestige have suffered under the weight of a global economic recession and two unpopular wars. As other states rise to challenge the United States, the “cost of dominance” will inevitably grow beyond the country’s ability to support it.⁶

Contrary to popular belief, the erosion of American power is not limited to domestic political infighting and economic hardship. Subtly, almost imperceptibly, American power is beginning to be undermined by states opposed to the current status quo.⁷ China, Russia, India and Brazil are emerging as potential challengers to U.S. hegemony. China in particular appears to have a vision, or at least a rough “blueprint” for a *new* world order.⁸ As the power and influences of these countries grow, the United States must make adjustments. The rise of these regional challengers along with the continued risk posed by asymmetric threats has already started to challenge U.S. dominance. The “war on terrorism” in particular damaged U.S. prestige abroad, while military overextension sapped American resolve. U.S. troops have finally withdrawn from Iraq and are currently planning their way out of Afghanistan. At the same time, politicians and military leaders, mired in budget shortfalls and ever-expanding debt, are contemplating significant cuts to government programs and bureaucracies. Defense cuts masquerading as “restructuring efforts” are now being debated in the halls of government.⁹ As the economy continues to flounder, the military is no longer immune to cuts that may fundamentally change certain core capabilities. Cutting the budget without a *definitive strategic plan* is a dangerous proposition that risks international misinterpretation and political mismanagement. Now, more than ever, it is imperative to breakdown preexisting notions of “national security” and update American grand strategy for a new century.

⁶ Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 156-185. Gilpin highlights the fact that hegemonic states require a constant economic and material surplus in order to maintain “dominance.” Once the “cost” of dominance exceeds the ability of a hegemon to support it, decisions must be made.

⁷ Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, “After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 41-72. Schweller and Pu, like Steven Walt, argue that the process of undermining the “status quo” established by a hegemonic power usually begins years before a power transition actually occurs. They argue that China has the “blueprints” for an alternative international system and may be in a place to begin this “delegitimation phase.”

⁸ Schweller and Pu, “After Unipolarity,” 45.

⁹ Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities of the 21st Century Defense* (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, January 2012).

In an era of declining prosperity and prestige, how does the United States define its global interests, meet its international obligations, and maintain a credible military force structure? The world is moving away from unipolarity towards a more diverse international environment that includes a wide variety of regional powers, non-state actors, and international institutions. Power is shifting, and the United States is in relative decline. Although it is politically unattractive, it may be time to consider retrenchment options.

Retrenchment Theory

Retrenchment is a policy predicated on reducing strategic commitments as a result of a decline in *relative* power.¹⁰ Usually this policy requires the retrenching state to move to a more defensible position, reduce risk, shift burdens, and economize.¹¹ There are a variety of historical examples that prove that “retrenchment” can be done both successfully and unsuccessfully. These examples, although helpful in some ways, can also be misleading.¹² Drawing direct parallels between the United States and the British Empire or the Roman Empire ignore important details and usually lead to broad generalizations.¹³ What usually gets the most attention is the precipitous “fall” from power that some historical examples seem to highlight.¹⁴ Retrenchment becomes part of a cautionary tale. Because of this, “retrenchment” has a decidedly negative connotation that usually congers up visions of waning empires, humiliating military retreats, and international insignificance.¹⁵ As a result, a retrenchment policy may not always seem

¹⁰ Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, “Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment,” *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 7-44.

¹¹ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 11.

¹² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 155-156. Nye, using Gibbon’s warning about “comparing epochs,” cautions that direct comparisons between the United States and other hegemonic powers is misleading. Even the popular comparison between the United States and the British Empire is problematic. The two powers are not the same; therefore any comparison would be problematic.

¹³ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 155-156.

¹⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 155. The fall of the Western Roman Empire was an absolute collapse due to invading barbarians and internal political decay. This dramatic fall from power should not be confused with “relative” decline.

¹⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 156-157. Nye points out that psychologically, Americans have a tendency to believe that the country is in decline. 1957 (Sputnik), 1972 (Post-Vietnam War), 1979 (Oil embargo) are a few moments where citizens believed that America was in decline. Politicians can use these “cycles of declinism” for domestic political leverage. Retrenchment policies can be bent to appear as international concessions and “weakness.”

politically attractive or domestically palatable.¹⁶ However, retrenchment *does not* necessarily have to signify a withdrawal into irrelevancy.¹⁷

This study will lean on two understated tenets of “retrenchment.” First, retrenchment is not necessarily a “national death sentence.” In fact, it may be the most appropriate strategy as the world moves towards multi-polarity. Second, retrenchment does not have to be a dramatic power collapse predicated on surrendering critical international interests.¹⁸ It can be a deliberate strategic shift based on an evolving international environment and a decline in resources. In other words, there is a *relative nature* to retrenchment that can be tailored or controlled to meet changing circumstances. This calls for a quick review of retrenchment theory.

In his book *War & Change in World Politics*, Robert Gilpin brilliantly dissects the idea of “retrenchment” and gives an almost “prescriptive” set of recommendations. His description is very general, but with a decidedly *pessimistic* bend.¹⁹ To Gilpin, as a rising power ascends and a declining power falls, tough decisions need to be made or conflict will be likely.²⁰ A declining power must do *at least* one of three things in order to prevent being eclipsed by a rising power: 1) Thwart the ambitions of the rising power through force, 2) increase the resource base, or 3) retrench to a more defensible position.²¹ To Gilpin, “retrenchment” is part of the life cycle of the international system.²² As a great power grows and develops, it seeks hegemonic status. Once hegemonic status is reached, it is finite and fleeting. Eventually, a state or empire declines and dies as other states rise to challenge the status quo.²³ It is this connection

¹⁶ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 16. Leveraging the works of Friedberg, Kennedy, Spruyt and others, MacDonald and Parent point out that powerful cultural or ideational factor can limit retrenchment policies. However, domestic constraints on “retrenchment” are not universal. In some cases, there may be powerful interest groups that support retrenchment.

¹⁷ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 12.

¹⁸ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 12. MacDonald and Parent point out that appeasement does not require retrenchment and vice versa.

¹⁹ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 194. Gilpin calls retrenchment a “hazardous course” seldom pursued by a declining power. It is a sign of weakness that can be exploited by rising powers while alienating allies. Dale Copeland, in his book *The Origins of Major War*, shares a similar view towards retrenchment policy.

²⁰ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 186-210.

²¹ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 186-210.

²² Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 186-210.

²³ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 186-210.

between “decline” and “death” that worries policymakers. However, not all authors share the pessimistic view of retrenchment that Gilpin portrays.

It is possible to retrench *gradually* and *deliberately* to a more supportable international position as potential rivals rise to challenge the status quo.²⁴ This does not necessarily signal a precipitous fall from international strength. Sometimes it is not how fast a country is declining, but how slowly it is growing relative to other states.²⁵ This requires a recognition that the relative balance of power is shifting and that policy must be congruent with long term economic and political trends. “Isolationism,” “containment,” and “primacy” have all run their course in American grand strategy, because they were congruent with economic and political trends of their day. Today, there is a shift happening again, and it is based on the fact that America is in *relative* decline. Although changes are inevitable, it is not necessarily as ominous as Gilpin portrays it.²⁶ Not only is retrenchment not as menacing as some academics made it out to be, it may actually be the best strategy for the 21st Century.

Retrenchment can be palatable if it is understood in the context of the current grand strategy of “primacy.” In this sense, “retrenchment” is a relative concept. For example, it is reasonable to argue that the United States could “retrench” all the way to complete “*isolationism*” if that was fiscally necessary or in the national interest. This would allow defense spending to be “cut to the bone” in order to balance the budget, defray entitlement costs, or pay down the deficit. This of course demands a “narrower” or “limited” view of overseas interests. When coupled with an “offshore balancing strategy,” then a realistic “retrenchment policy” that is not necessarily called “retrenchment” becomes clear. This is not simply a “force reduction” or “restructuring” exercise. It is a total reformulation of how the U.S. fits within the broader international scene.

²⁴ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 44. MacDonald and Parent argue that the faster the rate of decline, the more likely states are to reform their militaries, shed commitments, rely on allies, and shy away from the use of force. The faster a state is declining, the more likely they are to execute whole sale reforms.

²⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 155.

²⁶ MacDonald and Parent, “Graceful Decline?” 18. MacDonald and Parent point out that Gilpin makes retrenchment an inferior option to preventative war.

On the other end of the spectrum might be a “*selective engagement strategy*,” predicated on direct involvement only where America’s direct interests are threatened. Again, it may represent a “retrenchment” from a grand strategy based on “dominance,” “enlargement,” or “primacy,” but it is fiscally less “severe” than isolationism. Again, this is based on the idea that “retrenchment” can be considered a relative concept. Clearly it is a more limited view than those advocating “primacy” as a grand strategy. It represents a way to reduce costs, restructure international obligations, reprioritize U.S. interests, and build a defense structure that matches “ends” to “means.” By every account these strategies represent a retrenchment from “primacy.”

The current dialogue among policy makers is missing the connection between future budget cuts and a rational grand strategy. Making this connection requires a comprehensive view that leverages existing scholarship on “grand strategy,” “retrenchment theory,” and impending budget cuts. This study aims to bring these pieces together in order to propose a coherent, sustainable, and realistic policy going forward. This calls for a review of the grand strategy options available in an era of retrenchment.

Grand Strategy Options

In their 1996 article, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” Barry Posen and Andrew Ross reviewed four grand strategy options that were competing for traction within policy circles.²⁷ They included *neo-isolationism*, *selective engagement*, *cooperative security*, and *primacy*.²⁸ Throughout the course of their analysis, each strategy option was reviewed within the context of U.S. interests abroad, military costs, and national security implications.²⁹ This study will follow a similar format; however, “primacy” will be eliminated as a tenable grand strategy. Instead, *neo-isolationism*, *selective engagement*, and *cooperative security* will be viewed through the lens of retrenchment.

Each of these “retrenchment strategies” will be broken down into four major parts. First, each individual analysis will begin by examining the *goal* or *overarching*

²⁷ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 3-51.

²⁸ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 3-51.

²⁹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 3-51.

theme of the strategy. This section will examine the way each strategy interprets the international environment. It will also review each strategy's "vital interests" and how they are prioritized. The second section will examine the basic theoretical premise behind each grand strategy. The third part will focus on the instruments of power that most closely match the strategy in question. This section will highlight the interplay between the economic, military, informational, and diplomatic elements of power as they relate specifically to each strategy.

Finally, this analysis will look at the *basic* military "force structures" necessary to support each strategy (Figure 1 below).³⁰ Each of the three forces structures focus primarily on manpower and major combat systems (ships, airplanes, etc.).³¹ This simple outline is not intended to reflect *every* major U.S. military capability.³² Instead, it is intended to *guide* the analysis by establishing a theoretical model that highlights what each grand strategy *might* require. Based on this framework, more extensive diagrams will be included to highlight how the military cuts in Figure 1 would translate to cost-savings for each of the three strategies. This should help match the political "ends" defined in each grand strategy with the necessary military "means."³³

³⁰ Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011). Many of the numbers found in Figure 1 are based on the research done by CNAS.

³¹ Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," 3-51. The *analytical model* for the "force structure" diagram (Figure 1) was the "Base Force" and "Bottom-up Review" studies that were done by both the Bush and Clinton administrations in the aftermath of the Cold War. Both Les Aspin and Colin Powell developed basic force structures that accounted for possible post-Cold War mission sets as well as impending budget cuts. Barry Posen and Andrew Ross leverage these numbers in their 1996 assessment of post-Cold War grand strategy.

³² Reserve and National Guard forces are not accounted for in this analysis.

³³ There are a variety of post-Cold War force structures that were built during the 1990s. This includes the "Bottom-Up Reviews" commissioned by Les Aspin in 1993. Included was a series of options for Major Regional conflicts. Today, similar studies have been released to highlight potential cost savings.

	SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	COOPERATIVE SECURITY	NEO-ISOLATIONISM
<u>ARMY</u>			
Total Personnel BCTs	482,000 32	460,000 30	430,000 28
	HEAVY 8 INFANTRY 16 STRIKER 8	HEAVY 6 INFANTRY 16 STRIKER 8	HEAVY 4 INFANTRY 16 STRIKER 8
<u>AIR FORCES</u>			
USAF Fighter Wings	13	13	13
USAF Bomb Wings	4	3	3
USN Carrier Air Wings	9	8	7
<u>NAVY</u>			
CVN	10 CVN	9 CVN	8 CVN
CG	16 CG	16 CG	10 CG
DDG	74 DDG	72 DDG	70 DDG
LCS	27 LCS	27 LCS	12 LCS
SSN	55 SSN	45 SSN	45 SSN
<u>MARINE CORPS</u>			
Total Personnel	175,000	162,000	150,000
Regiments	7	6	5

Figure 1: Possible Force Structures

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 34-37)

The following essay will provide three different “retrenchment options” to policy makers and military leaders. Although each strategy rests on different theoretical approaches to international security, they all represent some form of “retrenchment” from the current policy. However, it is important to note that although each of these strategies will be analyzed individually, they are not mutually exclusive. To the strategic practitioners in government or the military, a synthetic approach will inevitably trump pure theoretical orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the following three options should provide a broad menu of ideas on how to retrench gracefully.

CHAPTER 2

Selective Engagement Strategy

Of all the retrenchment options, selective engagement is the closest to primacy. Defense cuts would certainly change the composition and size of the U.S. defense establishment, but the military would still be significantly larger and more capable than the nearest competitor. Instead of being a hegemonic power in relative decline, selective engagement would make the United States “first among equals” in a multipolar world. Military cuts would be substantial, but nowhere near the cuts that would accompany a move to isolationism or collective security. However, before analyzing possible cuts or changes to the military, it is important to understand the ideological and theoretical framework that defines selective engagement. Once this is established, it becomes easier to match strategic “ends” to material “means.”

America’s National Interests

“Formulating an American grand strategy requires making two big choices: selecting basic goals (what are America’s national interest?) and choosing appropriate means (how can America’s military power best protect these interests?).”¹ “Selective engagement” is a strategy predicated on clearly *delineating* and then *prioritizing* U.S. interests abroad. Once defined, these “vital interests” become the focus of U.S. international security policy.² Unlike primacy, selective engagement has a much more *limited* view of what *requires* the use of American power. While it is easy to say that the United States should be more “selective,” it is much more difficult to define exactly *what* American power should be used to influence.³ In other words, what defines “U.S. interests” abroad is sometimes vague and up for interpretation. Robert J. Art, one of the original architects of “selective engagement” outlines six national security interests that

¹ Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 79. The following paragraph leverages the theories of Robert Art.

² Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83-95. Art defines both “vital interests” and “desired interests.” Vital interests are essential to the physical security and economic welfare of the United States. Desired interests are much more nebulous. However, they do not carry the same potential costs and benefits as vital interest do.

³ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 84. This analysis utilizes the “vital interests” of the United States according to Robert Art. Other academics and policy makers may have different priorities or interests. Nevertheless, the “vital interests” defined here seem reasonable considering the variety of threats that the United States faces today.

require the attention of the United States. They are subdivided into what Art calls “vital interests” and “desirable interests.”⁴

Vital Interests. “Vital interests are those whose *costs* to the nation are somewhere between *severe to catastrophic* if not protected and whose benefits are large when protected.”⁵ Again, defining interests according to those events that could incur “*severe*” or “*catastrophic*” costs can be difficult. Despite the somewhat dubious language, Robert Art proposes three specific interests.⁶ At the top of the list is “*homeland security*.”⁷ While threats of invasion or large scale conventional attacks have been widely considered impossible for decades, there are asymmetric concerns that must be accounted for. Specifically, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of a determined terrorist or rogue-state could have a “catastrophic” effect if used in a large population center.⁸

The second vital interest is “Eurasian peace and stability.”⁹ Since the end of World War II, the United States has maintained standing forces throughout Europe and Asia to maintain security.¹⁰ From 1945 until 1991 these forces were tasked with hemming in the Soviet Union and defending Western Europe and Japan.¹¹ After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States maintained a military presence throughout the Eurasian continent to thwart the ambitious rise of a regional hegemon opposed to the status quo.¹² 1980s linear projections hinted at the rise of Germany and Japan as

⁴ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83.

⁵ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83.

⁶ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83.

⁷ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 84-90. Art’s concern is based around the NBC (Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical) threat posed by “rogue” elements within the international system. He believes this threat should be taken seriously due to the fact that 1) these weapons are becoming more available, 2) the motives of terrorist organizations are changing, and 3) although it is unlikely, there is the possibility that a rogue-state could utilize these weapons for ideological reasons. These ideas are consistent for the time that this article was written (1998-1999).

⁸ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 84-90.

⁹ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 89-92. Robert Art highlights three factors why “Eurasian peace” is a “vital interest.” First, intense competition or conflict on the Eurasian landmass could lead to the proliferation of NBC weapons. Second, a conflict in Eurasia could drag the United States into a larger global conflict. Finally, if Eurasian states went to war, it could cause widespread economic problems.

¹⁰ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 91.

¹¹ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 91.

¹² Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 91. Art believes that the Eurasian “great powers” are at peace because four of them (Germany, France, Britain, and Japan) are democracies, and the other two (Russia, China), while not democracies are becoming more liberal as they participate in the global economy. Nuclear deterrence is also a big reason why “great power war” has not reemerged since 1945.

potential “economic superpowers,” which concerned regional neighbors.¹³ China’s meteoric rise has also caused concerns in South East Asia. Today, European stability seems secure despite the economic problems of the last five years.¹⁴ However, in Asia, the unpredictable nature of North Korea and the continued exponential growth of India and China will challenge U.S. policymakers for the foreseeable future. The end of the Cold War fundamentally changed the power equation in Europe and Asia and silenced any remaining disciples of Mackinder.¹⁵ However, industrial Eurasia still presents plenty of security concerns as new regional powers rise to prominence.

Finally, the reliable flow of oil out of the Middle East is of “vital importance” to the world economy.¹⁶ Despite the fact that the United States has a diverse “petrol portfolio” that includes a broad base of suppliers, the oil reserves of the Middle East are critical to global economic stability and growth.¹⁷

Looking at the globe, proponents of selective engagement would look at industrial Eurasia, the Persian Gulf, and uncontrolled geographic spaces. Robert Art’s three “vital interests” delineate the core concerns for proponents of selective engagement. A threat to these interests will likely trigger the use of American military power.

Desirable Interests. “Desirable interests are those whose realization contributes an additional amount of America’s prosperity or makes its external environment more congenial to the values it espouses, and whose nonrealization imposes a cost, but not a severe one to its well-being or to a congenial international environment.”¹⁸ While these foreign policy interests may be important, they do not necessarily reach the threshold of

¹³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 164.

¹⁴ The European Union debt crisis involving Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Italy is currently testing the viability of an “economic union.”

¹⁵ While the fields of “geostrategy” and “geopolitics” remain strong, the specific theories of Mackinder have been discounted.

¹⁶ Art, “Geopolitics Update,” 92-95. There are five major reasons why the Middle East’s vast oil supplies are important. 1) Most industrialized countries count on the free flow of oil. 2) The oil reserves across Southern Asia are among the most extensive in the world. 3) Despite the fact that the United States imports oil from other states, any interruption of Gulf oil flow would disturb the world petroleum market. 4) Division of oil reserves between multiple states mitigates the chance of collusion and keeps prices low. 5) The U.S. military can help maintain a balance of power in the Persian Gulf, thereby preventing domination by any single regional power.

¹⁷ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 64. More than 66% of the world’s proven oil reserves are in the Persian Gulf. Any disruption to the flow would cause catastrophic political effects worldwide.

¹⁸ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83 & 95-101. “Desired interests” are based on the concept that while some interests do not necessarily meet the threshold of being “vital” to American security, there are interests that would make the international environment more congenial to U.S. policy and business.

the being “critical” to American security or survival.¹⁹ Preserving an open international economic order is certainly important, but it may not necessarily be “vital” according to the strict interpretation of the definition. For example, Art highlights the fact that 90% of the United States’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is based on “domestic” production.²⁰ Any interruption to the “open global economic order” would certainly have an effect on the U.S. economy and could even have a significant impact on quality of life, but it probably would not lead to a “catastrophic collapse” of the state.²¹

Another “desirable interest” that Art highlights is the “spread of democracy.”²² Clearly this is a contentious issue in the wake of the war in Iraq. However, there are those that argue that greater political freedom through democratic reforms will build an international environment congenial to the interests of the United States.²³ The same argument could be made for human rights.²⁴ American “values” help build an international order that is inherently friendly to American interests.²⁵

The final “desired interest” is to preserve the environment and prevent irreversible damage to global resources.²⁶ Art argues that environmental degradation could have an impact on security concerns as a result of rising sea levels, famines, floods, and natural disasters.²⁷ These three “desirable interests” do not always call for military intervention. In fact, these interests would be “selectively” supported based on their impact on American security.

“Making War on a Map”—Using Selective Engagement

Jomini described strategy as “making war on a map.”²⁸ Although this is an oversimplification of strategy, it provides an interesting way to view the globe. If a

¹⁹ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83 & 95-101. Art sets out three main “desired interests” that include, 1) economic openness, 2) protection of human rights / democratization, and 3) the protection of the environment.

²⁰ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83.

²¹ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 83.

²² Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 97. Art makes the point that advocating for human rights and supporting the spread of democracy will pacify states, prevent instability, and perpetuate economic growth.

²³ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 97.

²⁴ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 97.

²⁵ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 97.

²⁶ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 98. Art addresses the political, demographic, and economic threat of ozone depletion and global warming.

²⁷ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 98.

²⁸ Antoine-Henri Baron De Jomini, *The Art of War*, trans. Capt. G.H. Mendell and Lt. W.P. Craighill (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2007), 62.

proponent of selective engagement were to sit down in front of a map, the first order of business would be to both deter existing nuclear powers and prevent WMD from falling into the hands of terrorist organizations. This requires a commitment to maintaining a credible nuclear arsenal, preserving non-proliferation agreements, tracking global NBC weapons, and surveying uncontrolled geographic spaces (Southern Asia, Western Africa, and South America). Critical threats to homeland security, most likely in the form of a terrorist WMD attack, would be the number one priority.

Next, our “strategist” would probably point out the power dynamics in industrial Eurasia. The resources of Russia, the rise of Chinese military power, the exponential growth of the Indian economy, and the European Union debt crisis would all be important considerations. Abstracting out everything except “fungible power” would be a good place to start the analysis. The rise of Chinese military strength in the Pacific would probably be the biggest concern. In addition, Japanese and South Korean security would be an important consideration.

Next, this analyst would look to the oil rich Middle East. Our strategist would be concerned over the weakness of Iraq and the growing power of Iran. The development of an Iranian nuclear weapons program would be of grave concern. Maintaining a powerful Saudi military to counter-balance Iran (and its surrogates) would be an important policy goal. As Iranian power in the Middle East grows, keeping the Straits of Hormuz open to shipping would be absolutely essential.

After all of these considerations have been taken into account, a proponent of selective engagement would transition to the second tier of interests. Continuing to push for democratic reforms in the wake of the recent Arab Spring movement would be an important “diplomatic” and “informational” goal, but would probably not involve military power. The political situation in Syria, Libya, and Egypt would be important, but not constitute a “vital interest.”

After reviewing the “march of democracy” through North Africa and the Levant, a selective engagement strategist would look at the humanitarian disasters plaguing the world. Areas where relative depravity has created a caustic mix of high expectations and limited opportunities are usually ripe for violence. Humanitarian efforts in parts of Africa, South America, and Southern Asia would enter the strategic equation. This

would likely involve using all of the instruments of power except the military. Issues of genocide would likely be the only “values-based” interest that could potentially demand a military response. Even then, if intervention was not directly in the interests of the United States, then military power may not be used. The recent cases of genocide in Southern Sudan and Rwanda are a good example.

Finally, environmental concerns would be considered. In the end, the utilization of national resources (manpower and money) usually in the form of military intervention will be limited strictly to those issues that *directly affect the security of the United States*. Primacy forced the United States to be a global mediator involved in *every* aspect of international affairs. There had to be a presence on every continent. Selective engagement takes a more limited approach in which action is directly tied only to national interests.

Theoretical Basis of Selective Engagement

Selective engagement is an amalgamation of different international relations theories.²⁹ It has been called a “hybrid” strategy that incorporates the “state-centric” material power dynamics of realism with the “values-centric” ideology of liberalism.³⁰ Those interests deemed “vital” by proponents of selective engagement lean heavily on the ideals of self-preservation, security, and fungible power. Clearly issues of homeland security, regional power balancing, and safeguarding scarce resources draw from realist ideology.³¹

According to proponents of selective engagement, as the world moves from unipolarity to multipolarity, balance of power politics will become a more profound aspect of the international environment.³² As countries such as China, India, and Brazil rise in importance, their national aspirations will inevitably cause friction as each nation

²⁹ Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 15. Like Isolationism, Selective Engagement is based on the realist tradition of international politics and its focus on “concentrated power.” However, like Cooperative Engagement, Selective Engagement is also interested in peace.

³⁰ Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated” 79.

³¹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 15. Posen points out that unlike isolationism, Selective Engagement is based on the traditional mainstream “balance-of-power” realism outlined by Hans Morgenthau.

³² Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 15.

attempt to either maintain or resist the existing status quo.³³ The conflicting interests of these emerging nations must inevitably lead to a configuration predicated on “balance of power” politics.³⁴ “Balancing” as a process is usually carried out by either “diminishing” the power of an adversary, or “increasing” one’s own strength.³⁵ Today, China is *increasing* its own power through economic and military means while subtly *challenging the viability* of an international system created by American hegemony.³⁶ This tension between states can eventually lead to the formation of alliances and counter-alliances in order to either change the dynamics of the international system or thwart the objectives of overly ambitious rivals.³⁷ Sometimes this occurs through a “pure” balance between two or more entities (states or alliances), and sometimes there is a third party (often referred to as the “holder”) whose objective is to maintain balance within the system itself.³⁸ Here is where selective engagement enthusiasts see the role of the United States in Eurasia. “Selective engagement tries to ensure that the great powers understand that the United States does not wish to find out how a future Eurasian great power war might progress, and that it has sufficient military power to deny victory to the aggressor.”³⁹

This is also where a strategy predicated on “primacy” has its limitations in the minds of selective engagement advocates.⁴⁰ As the world moves towards multipolarity, the United States will inevitably require more resources to “police” the world and maintain peace *everywhere*.⁴¹ In fact, it is possible that a constellation of states could rise

³³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, NY: Alfred A Knoph, Inc., 1973), 167. Morgenthau maintains that there two factors that form the basis for the international system: 1) multiplicity, and 2) antagonism of its elements.

³⁴ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 167.

³⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 178.

³⁶ Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, “After Unipolarity: China’s Visions of International Order in an Era of U.S. Decline,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (Summer 2011): 41-72. Schweller and Pu, like Steven Walt, argue that the process of undermining the “status quo” established by a hegemonic power usually begins years before a power transaction actually occurs. They argue that China has the “blueprints” for an alternative international system and may be in a place to begin this “delegitimation phase.”

³⁷ Morgenthau, *Power Among Nations*, 178-197.

³⁸ Morgenthau, *Power Among Nations*, 193. Great Britain is often identified as the “holder” of the balance or the “balancer” or European politics.

³⁹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁴⁰ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁴¹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

up to challenge U.S. global power, thereby limiting American international ambitions.⁴² As powerful regional actors challenge the status quo, “primacy” will ultimately be too expensive to maintain. Considering the likelihood of this scenario, the United States must be able to compete *militarily* and *economically* in a multipolar environment, but be cognizant of the limited resources at its disposal. This requires a *stratification of interests*. What is worth expending resources on? Once the “vital interests” are established, the country must be willing to defend those interests at all costs.

Once the security of the states “vital interests” has been more or less accounted for, opportunities for more “values-driven” initiatives can gain traction. This is where selective engagement goes beyond “classical realism” towards a more “liberal” tradition.⁴³ As delineated above, the ideals of democracy, individual liberties, open markets, and human rights are all “desirable interests” that the United States supports internationally. One would think that this would create a natural tension between the “realist notion” of “relative gains” and the liberal idea of “absolute gains.” As Kissinger once noted, “Realists seek equilibrium and stability, whereas idealists strive for conversion.”⁴⁴ While Kissinger goes on to acknowledge the tendency to gravitate towards orthodoxy, he notes that “realist” policy practitioners can usually see the utility of ideas and values, and “liberals” can usually accept the power dynamics of geopolitics.⁴⁵ While this is true, it can be difficult to differentiate between “vital” interests from “desired” interests during cases of genocide, authoritarian injustice, or unfavorable power transitions.⁴⁶ However, those in favor of selective engagement would be quick to point out that these “value-centric” interests are probably not *worth* the commitment of American military power. The idea of bringing democracy at the tip of a sword or forcing universal human rights is a strategically bankrupt concept that only drains U.S. interests and is far too risky to attempt. However, in instances where ethnic conflicts run the risk of disturbing the delicate balance of power or inciting great power

⁴² Morgenthau, *Power Among Nations*, 187-189.

⁴³ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 80.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Nye, *The Future of Power*, 218. Original source: Henry A. Kissinger, “Realists vs. Idealists,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 12, 2005.

⁴⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 218.

⁴⁶ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 218-219. Nye points out that relegating human rights and democracy to a lower priority than interests tied directly to “national security” or “vital interests” is “analytically too narrow” and runs counter to American political culture.

conflict, military force may be necessary.⁴⁷ This is where the “selective” part of “selective engagement” becomes apparent.⁴⁸ There is no “guide” that predetermines what is worth the expenditure of resources.⁴⁹ In some cases, domestic politics may ultimately arbitrate cases where humanitarian intervention is required.⁵⁰

Joseph Nye points out that “In practice, the American tradition of foreign policy objectives is broader than simply the dichotomy between realism and idealism.”⁵¹ For some, husbanding power is the ultimate goal.⁵² This naturally leads to a debate about how to use this power.⁵³ The strategy of selective engagement lends some clarity to this debate. While the United States is willing to commit military power to ensure security of its “vital interests,” it is much less likely to engage in nation building, civil conflicts, or counterinsurgencies for the sake of humanitarian efforts or democratic transitions.

Instruments of Power

Military force is an important part of selective engagement strategy. The United States must be able to secure its vital interests. That means having a robust enough force to prevent an attack against the United States, maintain the status quo on the Eurasian continent, and prevent an interruption to the flow of oil from the Middle East. Near-peer competitors and rising regional powers will dictate how the United States paces potential threats on the Eurasian landmass. In addition, the U.S. military must also be able to interrupt and destroy hostile terrorist cells worldwide.

Nevertheless, there is also a need for a strong economy, effective diplomacy, and a convincing information strategy. The last few chapters have highlighted the importance of “material power” to protect the “vital interests” of the United States. However, many “interests” are best realized through good diplomacy, economic assistance, and the broad appeal of American values.

Selective engagement requires a smaller military; however, an argument could be made that as the military is downsized to fit the new geostrategic environment, the State

⁴⁷ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁴⁸ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁴⁹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁵⁰ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 16.

⁵¹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 219.

⁵² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 220.

⁵³ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 220.

Department should be enlarged to maintain U.S. interests in a multipolar and increasingly competitive world. Robert Art points out that “America’s diplomatic task must be to convince other states that what it finds in its interest is in theirs, too, once they clearly understand where their interests lie. Among other things, deft diplomacy requires detailed elaboration about what policies are necessary to support their shared interests, clear leadership in organizing coalitions to protect these interests, constant consultation about the best ways to attain them, concerting action to the extent feasible, and protection of the consensus in those rare occasions when unilateral American action is required.”⁵⁴ Overly coercive diplomacy based on imperial hubris is likely to provoke united opposition to American goals worldwide.⁵⁵ While good diplomacy is no guarantee that international opposition won’t eventually materialize, it can help clarify America’s position and mold the international environment.⁵⁶ While increasing the power of the State Department would certainly help with traditional “cabinet diplomacy” between governments, there may be more merit in a sustained “public diplomacy” campaign worldwide.

Throughout the last decade, diplomacy and strategic communications were often neglected in favor of military options. “Critics have worried that the overmilitarization of foreign policy undercuts credibility.”⁵⁷ As one diplomat put it, “tasking the military with strategic communications is somewhat akin to asking an aid worker to direct an air strike, or a diplomat to run a field hospital.”⁵⁸ Selective engagement would take a fresh approach to strategic communications and public diplomacy in order to repair America’s appeal worldwide.

⁵⁴ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 122. Art calls diplomacy, “an essential ingredient to Selective Engagement.

⁵⁵ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 122.

⁵⁶ Art, “Geopolitics Updated,” 122.

⁵⁷ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 107.

⁵⁸ Daryl Copeland, “Guerilla Diplomacy: The Revolution in Diplomatic Affairs,” *World Politics Review*, December 25, 2009, www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=4867. Copeland is a former Canadian Diplomat and is currently a professor at University of Southern California.

Force Structure

Selective engagement calls for a powerful military, but not one built for world-wide primacy. While the military would still have a global reach capable of a wide variety of missions, it would primarily be constructed to deter and if necessary fight an industrialized near-peer competitor on or near the Eurasian continent.⁵⁹ While the military would be only slightly smaller than it was in the 1990s, it would be significantly reduced from its current construct.⁶⁰ Manpower and equipment that were injected into the military during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would be shed almost immediately. This should drastically reduce the manpower costs. At the same time, major acquisitions projects would be cut or reduced to pace existing threats and reduce overall costs. Finally, major DoD spending on activities, manpower, and infrastructure would be reduced.

Naval Forces. The centerpiece of this structure would be a modern, robust naval and air component with an emphasis on power projection and limited expeditionary operations.⁶¹ While the plan would call for the elimination of at least one aircraft carrier, six older Ticonderoga Class Cruisers, and a number of Littoral Combat Ships, it would maintain a robust submarine fleet and strong destroyer contingent.⁶² Amphibious forces

FY 2012-2021		SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	
<u>ARMY</u>			
Total Personnel	482,000	HEAVY	8
BCTs	32	INFANTRY	16
		STRIKER	8
<u>AIR FORCES</u>			
USAF Fighter Wings		13	
USAF Bomb Wings		4	
USN Carrier Air Wings		9	
<u>NAVY</u>			
CVN		10 CVN	
CG		16 CG	
DDG		74 DDG	
LCS		27 LCS	
SSN		55 SSN	
<u>MARINE CORPS</u>			
Total Personnel		175,000	
Regiments		7	

Figure 2: Possible Force Structures

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 16)

⁵⁹ Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," 19.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 15-17. For additional information, see appendix (33-45). Many of the numbers in this analysis are based on the research done by CNAS. The following force structure largely follows the recommendations presented in this report.

⁶¹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15-17.

⁶² Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15-17. For Additional information, see appendix (34-35). The USS George Washington will be laid-up for refueling and overall in 2016. Decommissioning the aircraft carrier, would save close to \$7 billion. Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Reducing the Deficit: Spending and Revenue Options* (March 2011): 90-91. Cost savings associated with cruiser cuts based on Department of the Navy FY 2012 budget estimates and Joseph R. McDonald, "An Analysis of CG-47 Cruiser Class Operating and Support Costs Trends and Cost Relationship With Platform Age,"

would be cut due to a current “overinvestment” in amphibious assault capabilities.⁶³

“The remaining Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) capabilities can maximize their reach and forward presence through combinations of forward basing, forward rotation of Marines, and reducing selected ESGs from three amphibious ships to two, complemented by surface combatants, as the full capabilities of San Antonio–class amphibious ships come on line.”⁶⁴ These changes could limit humanitarian missions.⁶⁵

Naval units would focus on maintaining a strong presence in the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Persian Gulf.⁶⁶ Forward basing of naval aviation units and surface combatants to ports in Australia, Japan, Hawaii, Singapore, Bahrain, and Guam would reduce costly transit times and reassure regional allies.⁶⁷ Deployments to African ports, the North Atlantic, and South America would be significantly reduced as part of a repositioning plan. Presence in these areas would be maintained by regional allies or occasional visits by smaller U.S. vessels.



Naval Postgraduate School (June 2011): 14-15. LCS cuts are based on the Navy’s FY12 budget estimates; and Ronald O’Rourke, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program; Background, Issues, and Options for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research service, April 29, 2011).

⁶³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. For more information, see appendix (34-35) CNAS estimate are based on the Department of the Navy’s FY 2012 budget estimates; Congressional Budget Office, *An Analysis of the Navy’s Fiscal Year 2012 Shipbuilding Plan* (June 2011): 6, 21; Ronald O’Rourke, *Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, April 13, 2011): 6; and Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Report to Congress on Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for FY 2011* (February 2010): 22.

⁶⁴ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19.

⁶⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. CNAS points out, “The reduction in amphibious ships will shrink the U.S. military’s ability to conduct humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations worldwide.” This is acceptable sacrifice within a “selective engagement” strategy. Humanitarian mission are not “vital interests.”

⁶⁶ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15.

⁶⁷ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 19.

Air Power. Aviation units would see a reduction in the purchase of high-end aircraft such as the F-35, but would maintain a high-low mix with older models.⁶⁸ In addition to the B-2 and B-52, the B-1B bomber wings will continue to serve well into the next decade do to their unique combination of speed, precision, and payload. Some UAS development would be accelerated while other projects would be significantly reduced.⁶⁹ Airlift capacities would also be marginally diminished with the elimination of several older C-5s.⁷⁰ Other major acquisitions projects, such as the V-22 Osprey, would come under greater scrutiny with the possibility of cancelation or significant cuts in procurement. Nevertheless, selective engagement strategy would maintain a potent air arm with a broad array of capabilities. While certain programs would be cut, the U.S. military would still possess the most technologically advanced and potent Air Force and Naval Air Arm in the world.

FY 2012-2021		SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT
GROUND		
Ground Force Cuts	\$ 41.4	Reduce forces to 482,000 Soldiers and 173,000 Marines
Ground Combat Vehicle	\$ 7.0	Wait until 2021 for fielding and reinvest in Bradley
Joint Light Tactical Vehicle	\$ 10.9	Cancel Program
JTRS Mobile Radio	\$ 15.0	Cut By to 11,030 (86, 956 planned)
AIR		
F-35 JSF Restructuring	\$ 19.0	Reduce procurement by 50% and substitute F-16/F-18
MQ-4 BAMS Restructuring	\$ 4.0	Reduce procurement by 50% to 21 aircraft
C-5A Cuts	\$ 2.4	Retire 15 C-5As
V-22 Restructuring	\$ 7.9	Cancel program in 2016 at 363 units
B-1B Cuts	\$ -.-	Maintain current B-1B force level
NAVAL		
Aircraft Carrier Cuts	\$ 7.0	Reduce CVN fleet to 10 Carriers (5,600 sailors included)
Amphibious Ship Cuts	\$ 13.0	Cancel 2 LHA-6 ships and 3 new LSD
Submarine Cuts	\$ -.-	Maintain current Virginia Class procurement program
Cruiser Cuts	\$ 3.3	Cut 6 Ticonderoga Class Cruisers
LCS Cuts	\$ 7.0	End LCS program in 2017 after 27 ships (55 planned)

Figure 3: Cuts to U.S. Forces and Procurements Savings Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 16)

⁶⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17. Congressional Budget Office, *Alternatives for Modernizing U.S. Fighter Forces* (May 2009): 34-35; and National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform “\$200 billion in Illustrative Savings,” http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/Illustrativ_List_11.10.2010.pdf. (November 10,2010): Options 46.

⁶⁹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15-17. Congressional Budget Office, *Policy Options for Unmanned Aircraft Systems* (June 2011): 13. This plan would cut the Navy’s MQ-4C Broadband Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) in half. This should save \$4 billion through FY21. It is also possible that fewer RQ-1s and RQ-9s would be required under this force structure. This may allow money to be allocated towards more advanced UAS programs such as the Navy’s X-47B.

⁷⁰ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 36. General Duncan McNabb, Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Seapower (July 13, 2011). The Air Force is required by Congress to maintain at least 316 airlift aircraft. Procurement of the C-17 exceeded the Air Force’s requirement by 43 aircraft. There is room to eliminate 15 older C-5A aircraft.

Ground Forces. While land forces would maintain a broad spectrum of capabilities, the size of the forces would be significantly smaller and lighter than today.⁷¹ Ground personnel would return to their pre-“Global War on Terrorism” numbers. The Army would be reduced from a planned 520,000 to about 480,000 soldiers.⁷² The Marine Corps would cut from the planned 187,000 to about 173,000 active duty personnel.⁷³ That would equate to about 32 Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and 7 Marine Regiments.⁷⁴ That is a significant reduction from the peak “Global War on Terrorism” levels of 558,000 soldiers and 201,000 marines.⁷⁵ While 2001 personnel levels appear high, they were not sufficient for the Global War on Terrorism contingency. Heavy armor, mechanized infantry, and artillery would be maintained, but in reduced numbers. Some capabilities would transfer to the National Guard or Reserve in case of a national emergency. The heavier, more conventional army units that remain active would be prepared to thwart a North Korean advance into South Korea, or fight a conventional conflict in the Middle East against Iran. Any remaining units stationed in Europe would be reduced significantly.⁷⁶

Department of Defense. Beyond the material and active duty manpower cuts, a selective engagement strategy would also target defense wide expenditures including base support, maintenance costs, and contractors.⁷⁷ DoD civilians would be cut by 75,000 personnel which could save close to \$38 billion over ten years.⁷⁸ Missile defense programs would be substantially cut as well.⁷⁹ With dubious utility, the savings associated with the elimination of Missile Defense capabilities would ultimately be worth

⁷¹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15. For additional information, see appendix (37).

⁷² Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15. For additional information, see appendix (37). CBNA estimates based on internal assessments and a report from the Congressional Budget Office, *Budget Options Volume 2* (August 2009): 7.

⁷³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15. For additional information, see appendix (37).

⁷⁴ Number of BCTs and Regiments based on internal estimate of required combat power.

⁷⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 15.

⁷⁶ Headquarters U.S. Army Europe, “DoD Announces Plans to Adjust Posture of Land Forces in Europe,” U.S. Army Europe Release 2012-02-16-en (Heidelberg, Germany: Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, February 16 2012), 1-2. This press release from U.S. Army Europe delineates the reduction or elimination of V Corps Headquarters (750 soldiers), the 170th & 172nd BCTs, and 2,500 support / enabler soldiers. This will reduce forces in Europe by 25% by 2017 (30,000 soldiers). Infrastructure will also be reduced in order to save an additional \$5 billion.

⁷⁷ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

⁷⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

⁷⁹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

the long term risk. Finally, research and development expenditures, commercial activities spending, and intelligence programs would be cut to 10% below FY11 spending numbers from FY13-FY21.⁸⁰ While these changes would potentially restrict military R&D and intelligence capabilities, it would save billions of dollars.⁸¹ When combined with force structure cuts outlined above, cost savings could run as high as \$500-550 billion over the next decade.⁸²

FY 2012-2021	SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	COOPERATIVE SECURITY	NEO-ISOLATIONISM
DoD Activities			
Base Support	\$ 19.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 26.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 39.0 (15% below FY11)
Depots	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4
DoD Civilian Cuts	\$ 36.7 (75,000 people)	\$ 48.9 (100,000 people)	\$ 73.3 (150,000 people)
DoD Retail (exchanges)	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1
Headquarters Contractors	\$ 10.2	\$ 15.3	\$ 25.5
Intelligence	\$ 53.1 (10% below FY11)	\$ 70.8 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 106.2 (15% below FY11)
Joint Explosive Device Org	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (shut down)
Missile Defense	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5
Commercial Activities	\$ 40.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 53.9 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 80.9 (15% below FY11)
Misc. Procurement	\$ 23.6 (10% below FY11)	\$ 31.5 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 47.2 (15% below FY11)
Research and Development	\$ 56.2 (10% below FY11)	\$ 75.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 112.5 (15% below FY11)
TOTAL	\$ 294.0	\$ 375.6	\$538.8

Figure 4: DoD Activities Reduction Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 39-41.)

Summary

Selective engagement certainly has its risks. The United States would be limited in the number and intensity of conflicts that it chose to engage in worldwide. Considering limited resources, selective engagement may be the most logical retrenchment option as the United States transitions from an era of hegemonic primacy to an era characterized by multipolarity. However, there are other compelling options that provide more comprehensive cost savings. If selective engagement represents the least invasive form of retrenchment, “isolationism” represents the most draconian.

⁸⁰ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

⁸¹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

⁸² Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 39.

CHAPTER 3

Isolationism Strategy

Isolationism is by far the most “severe” retrenchment option. It also tends to be the least popular among contemporary policy makers. If some form of “neo-isolationism” were to become the basis of “American grand strategy,” massive defense cuts would drastically change the face of the military for the foreseeable future. Isolationism would remove the United States from its current place atop world politics and refocus on homeland defense, economic development, and profitable trade relationships. In other words, “instead of strategic engagement—a geographically wide-ranging and effortful political-military activism for shaping the behavior of opponents with varying combinations of forcefulness and accommodation—there is strategic nonengagement.”¹¹⁶ International obligations would be shed and military forces stationed abroad would be recalled and ultimately cut.

To generations that grew up after World War II, the concept of “isolationism” seems completely at odds with American values. Over the course of the last fifty years, the leadership exercised by the United States has forged the norms and institutions that characterize the current international system.¹¹⁷ Global crusades against “tyranny, poverty, and aggression” have created an environment amiable to American growth and prosperity.¹¹⁸ The idea of an international system where the role of the United States is not only *reduced*, but *voluntarily conceded* in the interest of *domestic prosperity* seems counterintuitive. However, a review of American grand strategy demonstrates a propensity to gravitate towards isolationism.¹¹⁹ The founding fathers were skeptical of

¹¹⁶ Eric Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 2.

¹¹⁷ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2005), 136-140. At the end of World War II, Keohane highlights the fact that the United States was the leading power in the world. American influence rested on three major benefits that the international community received by “joining American-centered regimes and deferring to U.S. leadership.” They include: 1) A stable monetary system, 2) Provisions for an open market system, and 3) Shared access to oil at stabilized prices. Powerful states (such as the United States) will almost always create an international political economy that suits their interests. After the victory in World War II, isolationism was abandoned in order to thwart the ambitions of a nuclear armed Soviet Union and create a world more amiable to American goals.

¹¹⁸ Keohane, *After Hegemony*, 136-140.

¹¹⁹ Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 49-62. George Washington’s Farewell Address cautioned against getting entangled in “European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice.” For over a century, Washington’s words guided American foreign policy. Of course Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson would take on more “internationalist” policies; however, the nation always seemed to revert back to isolationism until the Cold War.

internationalist ambitions and warned against “entangling alliances” and “foreign wars.”¹²⁰ It was John Adams that so eloquently implored the new republic not to “go abroad looking for monsters to destroy.”¹²¹ This sentiment would last for over a century until the Wilsonian experiment with internationalism in the wake of World War I.¹²² Nevertheless, “noninterventionist” tendencies continued to dictate the direction of American foreign policy right up until the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Today, “isolationism” as a strategic concept sometimes goes by different names such as “disengagement,” “noninterventionism,” or “benign detachment.”¹²³ Contemporary figures such as Patrick Buchanan and Ron Paul are the most high-profile standard-bearers for the rather inert “noninterventionist movement” today. While the momentum of hegemony has largely relegated “isolationism” to the fringe, it is still worth examining as a Grand Strategy in an era of retrenchment. If “selective engagement” represents the most discreet form of retrenchment, then “isolationism” represents the most invasive form. The next few pages will outline “neo-isolationism” as a potential strategy for the next century.

America’s National Interests

What would define America’s “interests” from an isolationist perspective? Unlike “selective engagement” theory with its stratified list of “vital interests” and “desired interests,” isolationist goals are relatively easy to define.¹²⁴ Isolationists look first and foremost at the *security* and *prosperity* of the United States. There is no laundry

¹²⁰ Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 50.

¹²¹ Quoted in Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 20.

¹²² Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 186. The Founding Father’s commitment to isolationism influenced several generations of American leaders. Even in the mid-19th century, American politicians such as Henry Clay and John Calhoun advocated for American isolationism. Henry Clay was quoted as saying, “liberty can be better served by Americans keeping their lamp burning bright on this western shore, as a light to all nations, than to hazard its utter extinction, amid the ruins of a fallen or falling republics in Europe.” Calhoun sounded like an early “soft power” advocate when he stated, “If we remain quiet...and let our destinies work out their own results, we shall do more for liberty, not only for ourselves but for the example of mankind, than can be done by a thousand victories.”

¹²³ Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 5. Posen and Ross highlight the fact that the “new isolationists” rarely refer to their movement as “isolationism.”

¹²⁴ Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99): 83-95. Art defines both “vital interests” and “desired interests.” Vital interests are essential to the physical security and economic welfare of the United States. Desired interests are much more nebulous. However, they do not carry the same potential costs and benefits as vital interest do.

list that includes international peace, democratization, human rights, poverty reduction, or resource security.

“How then should the United States formulate a foreign policy? Every action taken abroad should reflect purpose behind the government: namely, to serve the interest of American society and the people who live in it.”¹²⁵ The focus is thus *directly tied* to the “*American people*,” not the Middle East or the Eurasian landmass. Isolationists are certainly not concerned about “nation building” or actively engaging in overseas “humanitarian” efforts. “National defense—the protection of ‘the security, liberty, and prosperity of the American people’—is the only ‘vital’ U.S. Interest.”¹²⁶ Internationalism is thus not only unnecessary, but can be counterproductive to domestic wellbeing. “The historical isolationists addressed most of the country’s welfare values: Extensive and profitable trade relations, economic development, financial stability, economic growth, low taxes, and (to some extent) the public funding of social programs.”¹²⁷ Not only do international military adventures and an aggressive foreign policy do little to *quantifiably improve* American domestic security, but they actually take money away from taxpayers and usually have an uncanny tendency to create widespread international dissatisfaction with the United States.

Bedrock Principles of Isolationism

Considering the isolationist focus on “homeland security” and “domestic prosperity” as “vital interests,” how would an isolationist policy look? Doug Barlow, policy analyst and senior fellow at the Cato Institute, outlined five “bedrock principles” that noninterventionist policies should rest on.¹²⁸ First, “The security of the United States and its constitutional system should remain the U.S. government’s highest goal. Individuals may decide to selflessly risk their lives to help others abroad; policymakers, however have no authority to risk their citizens’ lives, freedom, and wealth in similar

¹²⁵ Doug Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 579 (January 1994), 11.

¹²⁶ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 7 & 10.

¹²⁷ Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 214

¹²⁸ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13. The following paragraph outlines Doug Bandow’s “bedrock principles.”

pursuits.”¹²⁹ This reinforces the notion that humanitarian efforts or nation building are outside the scope of an isolationist foreign policy.

The second principle addresses the counterproductive nature of foreign intervention.¹³⁰ Military adventures in the name of protecting the sovereignty or security of other nations is expensive and risky.¹³¹ While aggressive regional powers will rise, they will have no way to threaten the integrity of the United States.¹³² In order to thwart these ambitions, Bandow highlights the fact that “many smaller nations may still need to forge preemptive alliances to respond to potentially aggressive regional powers.”¹³³ Direct military assistance by the United States military only complicates regional security issues and threatens to drag America into an expensive conflict that neither threatens its existence nor benefits its citizenry.

Third, “America’s most powerful assets for influencing the rest of the world are its philosophy, free institutions, the ideas of limited government and free enterprise that are now sweeping the globe, and its economic prowess as the world’s most productive nation.”¹³⁴ This guiding principle is akin to Joseph Nye’s “soft power” argument from his book *The Future of Power*.¹³⁵ While “soft power” has sometimes been maligned by skeptics as too nebulous in a world of quantifiable power dynamics, the idea does have merit. In fact, “noted British realist E.H. Carr described international power in three categories: military power, economic power, and *power over opinion*.”¹³⁶ Isolationists believe that it is this “power over opinion” that is America’s most enduring quality. Ultimately, the United States best serves the world not through its military might or internationalism, but through its culture, commerce, literature, ideas, etc.¹³⁷

The fourth and final guiding principle speaks to the hopelessness of trying to “right every wrong.” Injustice, conflict, poverty, aggression, and terror will always be a

¹²⁹ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³⁰ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³¹ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³² Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³³ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³⁴ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

¹³⁵ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 84. Nye highlights three basic “soft power” resources: 1) Culture, 2) political values, and 3) foreign policy. These three sources of soft power are very similar to tenet three of Bandow’s “bedrock principles.”

¹³⁶ Quoted in Nye, *The Future of Power*, 82.

¹³⁷ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

part of the world we live in.¹³⁸ As crass and selfish as it might sound, an isolationist would make the argument that the American people deserve to live free of these international ills. As Bandow puts it, “Their lives and treasure should not be sacrificed in quixotic crusades unrelated to their basic interests.”¹³⁹

These “guiding principles” may seem almost radical to the contemporary electorate, but the ideas are nothing new. Unlike other grand strategies, isolationism has only one all-encompassing “vital interest”: The security and prosperity of the American people. The international system will adjust itself by counterbalancing threats and working through their own security dilemmas. An “isolationist strategist” would start by rethinking and reordering the way the U.S. views its position in the world. Retrenchment is a big part of that strategy.

“Making War on a Map”—Using Isolationism

If a group of isolationist strategists were to sit down in front of a world map in 2012, the first thing that they would highlight is the huge number of U.S. troops deployed worldwide. While advocates of “primacy” are concerned with a *global presence*, and “selective engagement” enthusiasts are concerned with the *Middle East* and *Eurasian landmass*, “Isolationists” advocate *reducing the U.S. military footprint worldwide*. The exorbitant costs associated with a global presence coupled with the dubious utility of these permanently deployed forces make them an economic and political liability. Remember, retrenchment is about bringing resources into balance with interests.

Beginning in Europe, an isolationist would see the troops in Germany as nothing more than a useless expenditure of taxpayer money. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the ascendancy of the European Union, there should be no reason for the United States to subsidize European security. Maintaining expensive manpower and infrastructure in Germany, Italy, and Great Britain provides little advantage to the American people. An even greater blunder is moving into Eastern Europe to provide

¹³⁸ Quest Study Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 2003), 1423. Matthew 24:6-7 states, “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.”

¹³⁹ Bandow, “Keeping the Troops and the Money at Home,” 13.

training and equipment of dubious military utility to countries whose security does not directly affect the United States.

Turning to the Pacific, there appears to be little need for American security guarantees for many of the more affluent Asian countries. Japan is a wealthy industrialized country that has the economic means, technical competence, and political institutions to determine its own military destiny. While some worry that the United States pulling out of its security guarantee would force Japan to move towards developing a nuclear weapon, an isolationist would encourage the Japanese to prepare and pay for their own security by any means they deem appropriate. South Korea is another example of a country that should be able to defend its own interests. The fact that it is faced with an unpredictable and dangerous neighbor does not obligate the American people to bolster its security. Isolationists believe that smaller countries faced with a regional security threat should be able to either buildup their own military forces or join regional alliances to balance a common threat.

It might help to add some fidelity to this argument. South Korea has twice the population of North Korea, twice the available military manpower, twice the labor force, and the world's 20th largest economy.¹⁴⁰ While North Korea has an ill-defined yet threatening nuclear capability, its economy, population, and indigenous resources are a shadow of what South Korea has at its disposal. In the field of military technology, South Korea is leaps and bounds ahead of its northern neighbor. These figures lead pundits to ask why the United States has to subsidize South Korean security. While there might have been a time during the Cold War when it made good political sense to station troops in South Korea, that moment is long gone. Considering its enormous economy, South Korea *only* spends 2.7% GDP on defense, and its northern neighbor is among the most dangerous countries in the world.¹⁴¹ That statistic ranks South Korea number 51 in defense spending as a percent of GDP.¹⁴² For skeptics, that number seems comparatively low for a country that is *technically* still at war. Meanwhile, U.S. Forces in Korea

¹⁴⁰ CIA World Factbook, "Country Comparisons," www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

¹⁴¹ CIA World Factbook, "Country Comparisons," www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

¹⁴² CIA World Factbook, "Country Comparisons," www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

number close to 28,500 personnel.¹⁴³ Sustaining these personnel, their equipment, and the necessary infrastructure in Korea comes at an exorbitant cost. Isolationists believe that these forces should return to the United States and that the South Korean government should pay more for its own security. It appears to have the resources and capability to defend itself.

With regards to the Middle East, an isolationist would argue that contemporary problems are perpetuated by the continued presence of the U.S. military. American troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman has fueled radical Islamic hatred across Southern Asia. Conflict has become a self-fulfilling prophesy. In fact, by overextending its commitments to nation building projects of limited utility, the United States has driven itself into debt and weakened its position worldwide. Isolationists would argue that the current neoconservative obsession with re-making the Middle East has played right into the hands of radical terrorist elements.

Finally, worldwide humanitarian missions are a waste of resources. As harsh as this may sound, impoverished populations across Africa and South America are not a threat to U.S. security.¹⁴⁴ While alleviating poverty is a worthwhile cause for individuals or religious institutions, it should not be within the American government's purview. Idealistic crusades to "fix" the world rarely meet expectations and often times either exacerbate problems or result in the loss of blood and treasure.

Protected by a nuclear umbrella, benign neighbors, and two vast oceans, the United States is the safest nation on earth. Much like the ancient Athenian ruler Pericles, modern isolationists caution against the danger of overextension. In this sense, the biggest threat to American security is the imperial hubris that often accompanies hegemonic primacy. Economic and military overextension is a self-imposed albatross. Fighting wars for dubious objectives can have dire consequences even for the most powerful nation. Isolationists would reign in America's substantial military presence worldwide by voluntarily retrenching to enhance national defense.

¹⁴³ United States Forces Korea web site, "Force Structure," http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/Uploads/120/USFK_tri_fold_Oct_2011.pdf.

¹⁴⁴ Alan Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terror* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). Alan Krueger, a noted expert on terrorism, makes the argument that poverty and depravity have no direct connection to terrorism. Therefore, missions to alleviate poverty in the name of national security are misguided.

Theoretical Basis of Isolationism

Isolationism is based on “defensive realism.”¹⁴⁵ Defensive realism is a concept developed by academics including Steven Walt and Jack Snyder. It is predicated on two major assumptions.¹⁴⁶ First, this brand of realism assumes that a “rational” state’s primary goal is to achieve security.¹⁴⁷ Thus, states *expand* in order to enhance their security situation vis-à-vis existential threats.¹⁴⁸ If the offensive has the advantage due to a relative power differential, states become concerned with survival and thus react more aggressively.¹⁴⁹ However, states are more likely to feel secure when the “defense” has the advantage through technology or geography.¹⁵⁰

“Defensive realists make a second assumption: that the workings of the international system demonstrate that a state’s security requires *limited* external interests, small armies, and carefully restrained foreign policies.”¹⁵¹ Anything beyond an “incremental” or “moderate” foreign policy is ultimately counterproductive.¹⁵² This is primarily because “defensive realism is premised on the notion that the system teaches states to seek only minimal security because aggression always faces balancing, the costs of expansion quickly exceed the benefits, and defenders usually have the advantage.”¹⁵³

From an isolationist standpoint, the United States, as an insular power, has the ultimate combination of favorable geography and technology. By maintaining limited international interests, a smaller military, and a nonaggressive foreign policy, U.S. security will be enhanced. The idea is that the “system” rewards moderate or cautious behavior. These ideas are attractive to those who champion a strategy predicated on retrenchment.

Instruments of Power and “Offshore Balancing”

In the absence of a powerful military presence overseas, how would the United States pursue its limited interests abroad? America is an insular power, protected by its

¹⁴⁵ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 7 & 10.

¹⁴⁶ Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay” *International Security* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1992): 191.

¹⁴⁷ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 191.

¹⁴⁸ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 191.

¹⁴⁹ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 191.

¹⁵⁰ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 191.

¹⁵¹ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 192.

¹⁵² Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 192.

¹⁵³ Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics,” 192.

advantageous geography, nuclear umbrella, natural resources, and military technology. Its interests, as narrowly defined as they are under this strategy, are best served through economic ties and diplomacy. Perhaps the most compelling way to maintain an international environment favorable to American security is through “offshore balancing.”¹⁵⁴

Offshore balancing is not a new strategic concept. It has been used successfully for decades by both the United States and the British Empire to thwart the rise of potential hegemonies on the Eurasian continent.¹⁵⁵ Under a “neo-isolationist strategy,” the United States would use “offshore balancing” to check the ambitions of a growing regional power. In other words, regional actors (Japan, the European Union, etc.) would balance rising “revisionist powers” instead of forcing the United States to intervene.¹⁵⁶ Several examples exist throughout the 19th and 20th century. During both World War I and World War II, the United States did not interfere with European politics until it became clear that a continental great power threatened to become a continental hegemon.¹⁵⁷ In both wars, the United States depended on the United Kingdom, France, and Russia to contain and balance German ambitions.¹⁵⁸ American aid provided some semblance of assistance, but it was not until it became evident that the regional balance favored the rise of a regional hegemon that the United States entered the wars.¹⁵⁹

Today, as the world moves from unipolarity to a more multi-polar configuration, offshore balancing is once again a viable option. “An offshore balancing strategy would have two crucial objectives: minimizing the risk of U.S. involvement in a future great power (possibly nuclear) war, and enhancing America's relative power in the international system.”¹⁶⁰ This calls for a combination of good diplomacy and possibly even a change to U.S. economic thinking.

¹⁵⁴ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001) 231-266.

¹⁵⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 231-266.

¹⁵⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 231-266.

¹⁵⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 231-266.

¹⁵⁸ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 231-266.

¹⁵⁹ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 231-266.

¹⁶⁰ Christopher Layne, “From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1997): 86-124.

Diplomatically, the United States would pull out of its existing Cold War alliances and allow regional competitors such as Japan and China to balance each other *and* pay for their own security. Without a binding security guarantee, Japan would be obligated to build its own military capability and balance a rising China. South Korea would be forced to either enter into alliances with regional partners or invest more in its military. In Europe, the European Union, led by Germany and France would invest more in a European Union military capability to balance Russia and protect its interests in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, the structure of the European Union would prevent any single state from dominating the European continent. As the insular power, the United States' relative power would thus grow.¹⁶¹ With a smaller military, American diplomats would be utilized to help mediate conflicts and push U.S. interests as an independent power broker or "king-maker" concerned purely with U.S. security.

"An offshore balancing strategy would also be grounded on the assumption that relative economic power matters. Domestic economic revitalization and a neo-mercantilist international economic policy would be integral components of the strategy."¹⁶² Without the United States playing the role of benevolent "hegemonic" regulator of the world economy, relative gain would start to become more important than absolute gains.¹⁶³ In addition, much like the Lend-Lease program of the 1930s, the United States would still use its substantial economy to strengthen favored regional actors. A renewed and revitalized American economy would enhance the position of the U.S. abroad and improve conditions domestically.

Isolationism coupled with an offshore balancing strategy would fundamentally change the international environment. It would also change the way the United States exercised its substantial power. Instead of "military power" being the focus, economic power and diplomatic leverage would become critically important. As the size of the State Department grows, the military would shrink substantially.

¹⁶¹ Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing," 86-124.

¹⁶² Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing," 86-124.

¹⁶³ Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing," 86-124.

Force Structure

Of the three “grand strategies” outlined in this analysis, isolationism demands the largest cuts to the military force structure.¹⁶⁴ In this scenario, politicians would have to be very deliberate about how the U.S. military was deployed and used abroad. With the loss of large numbers of personnel, equipment, and infrastructure, the military would be a shadow of its post-Cold War form. Fighting a single regional power would be difficult and costly, but fighting two regional powers in different theaters would be almost impossible. Limitations in logistics, manpower, and heavy equipment would constrain options. While sufficient forces may be available for operations in *either* the Western Pacific or the Middle East, overseas contingency operations in Africa or South America would receive almost no support.¹⁶⁵

Humanitarian emergencies or ethnic conflicts would likely be bypassed due to the possibility that they may tie down too much manpower.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the United States would still maintain a military capable of at very least protecting the North American continent. That begins with sea and air power.

Naval Forces. Naval forces would be cut, but would still maintain an ability to patrol major shipping routes and protect American trade. Three aircraft carriers would be decommissioned almost immediately along with the associated personnel and support infrastructure.¹⁶⁷ In

FY 2012-2021	NEO-ISOLATIONISM
ARMY	
Total Personnel	430,000
BCTs	28
	HEAVY 4 INFANTRY 16 STRIKER 8
AIR FORCES	
USAF Fighter Wings	13
USAF Bomb Wings	3
USN Carrier Air Wings	7
NAVY	
CVN	8 CVN
CG	10 CG
DDG	70 DDG
LCS	12 LCS
SSN	45 SSN
MARINE CORPS	
Total Personnel	150,000
Regiments	5

Figure 5: Possible Force Structure

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 21)

¹⁶⁴ Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (33-45). Many of the numbers in this analysis are based on the research done by CNAS. The following force structure largely follows the recommendations presented in this report. Supporting citations are included for reference.

¹⁶⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22.

¹⁶⁶ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22.

¹⁶⁷ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 34-35. The USS George Washington will be laid-up for refueling and overall in 2016. Decommissioning the aircraft carrier, would save close to \$7 billion. This study estimates that eliminating 3 aircraft carriers would save approximately \$21 billion. Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Reducing the Deficit: Spending and Revenue Options* (March 2011): 90-91.

addition, surface combatants would be significantly reduced. 12 Ticonderoga Class cruisers would be decommissioned and the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) program would be cancelled immediately resulting in the purchase of only 12 of the planned 55 ships.¹⁶⁸ Subsurface units would also be trimmed. The Virginia Class submarine buy would be restructured so that only 10 submarines (of a planned 19) would be purchased through 2021.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, older attack submarines would continue to be decommissioned as they reach the end of their service life without immediate replacements. Amphibious capabilities would also be reduced by cutting two new LHAs and three LHDs (large amphibious ships that can carry helicopters, VSTOL aircraft, and landing craft).¹⁷⁰

These cuts would no doubt save money, but they would also reduce power projection capabilities. At any one time, only seven aircraft carriers would be available due to the refit/refueling schedule. Destroyers would form the backbone of the “new” navy. Major gaps in naval coverage would result. However, American homeland defense and lines of communications would remain secure. The South Atlantic and the Mediterranean would be largely ignored. This may lead to the termination of Second, Fourth, and Sixth Fleet Headquarters. Permanently based ships and aircraft in Japan and Italy would be recalled, forcing the European Union and the Japanese Self Defense Force to take a much bigger role in securing their own sea lanes.

The nature of these cuts brings to mind the changes advocated by British naval theorist Julian Corbett in the early twentieth century.¹⁷¹ An isolationist strategist would find encouragement in Corbett’s maxim that “the objective of naval warfare is to control maritime communications,” not to provide “maritime dominance,” “power projection,” or

¹⁶⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20. For Additional information, see appendix (34-35). Cost savings based on Department of the Navy FY 2012 budget estimates and Joseph R. McDonald, “An Analysis of CG-47 Cruiser Class Operating and Support Costs Trends and Cost Relationship With Platform Age,” Naval Postgraduate School (June 2011): 14-15. LCS cuts are based on the Navy’s FY12 budget estimates; and Ronald O’Rourke, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program; Background, Issues, and Options for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research service, April 29, 2011).

¹⁶⁹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 34-35. CNAS estimates based on the Navy’s FY 2012 budget which is the same figure estimated by the Congressional Budget Office, Budget Options (February 2005): 16.

¹⁷⁰ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 34-35. CNAS estimates that the amphibious fleet could drop below the U.S. Navy’s inventory goal of 33 ships.

¹⁷¹ Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, ed. Eric J. Grove (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 128-152.

“command of the sea.”¹⁷² This role, which Corbett assigned to a large number of “cruisers” rather than large “capital ships,” would be filled by the Navy’s large number of multi-role destroyers (DDGs). These ships would execute sea control, stand-off strike, and ballistic missile defense. Despite draconian cuts to naval power, the U.S. Navy would still be the most powerful fleet in the world. It would provide isolationists and off-shore balancing advocates the cheapest means of defending U.S. interests.

Air Power. Air Force and Naval aviation would retain substantial capabilities, but with slightly smaller numbers of advanced aircraft. To start with, the Air Force would receive 850 (about half of its requested number) F-35As and the Navy would receive about 330 F-35Cs.¹⁷³ However, unlike the selective engagement force structure outlined in the last chapter, cuts to the F-35 program *would not* be made up through the purchase of additional F-16s (Air Force) or F/A-18s (Navy).¹⁷⁴ While the F-35 is purported to have excellent capabilities, the smaller numbers and elimination of supplemental 4th generation aircraft acquisitions come with significant risks.¹⁷⁵

Marine Corps aviation would begin a slow decay. Under the isolationist force structure, the Marines would lose the F-35B completely without a replacement.¹⁷⁶ This would mean that as AV-8B Harriers and older F/A-18s reach the end of their service lives, the Marines would permanently lose their fixed wing attack capability.¹⁷⁷ The Marines would still retain rotary wing attack assets, which would ultimately become the centerpiece of its integral close air support (CAS) capability.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, 128-152.

¹⁷³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (36). CNAS numbers based on Congressional Budget Office, *Alternatives for Modernizing U.S. Fighter Forces* (May 2009): 34-35.

¹⁷⁴ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁷⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁷⁶ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform “\$200 Billion in Illustrative Savings,”

http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/Illustrativ_List_11.10.2010.pdf. (November 10, 2010): Options 47.

¹⁷⁷ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22.

¹⁷⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22.

While the U.S. would maintain a technological edge over most competitors worldwide, the fighter force would be smaller and less diverse. This would most likely result in the elimination of some National Guard units over active duty squadrons, although the reverse is also an option. The Air Force would also lose all of its B-1B bombers in order to save on maintenance and repair costs.¹⁷⁹ While this would take away part of the Air Forces long range strike capability, B-2s and B-52s would remain a part of the arsenal. In addition, funding for the next long range bomber would continue in order to maintain a credible nuclear and conventional delivery platform long into the future. In addition, some support aircraft such as the V-22 and C-5A would be cut substantially under this force structure due to their exorbitant cost and dubious utility.¹⁸⁰ Finally, UAS programs such as the Navy's RQ-4 BAMS would be eliminated to save additional money.¹⁸¹ Capability gaps would force services to coordinate and

FY 2012-2021		NEO-ISOLATIONISM
GROUND		
Ground Force Cuts	\$ 105.1	Reduce forces to 430,000 Soldiers and 150,000 Marines
Ground Combat Vehicle	\$ 7.0	Wait until 2021 for fielding and reinvest in Bradley
Joint Light Tactical Vehicle	\$ 10.9	Cancel Program
JTRS Mobile Radio	\$ 15.0	Cut By to 11,030 (86, 956 planned)
AIR		
F-35 JSF Restructuring	\$ 42.6	850 F-35A, 0 F-35B, and 330 F-35C, no additional buys
MQ-4 BAMS Restructuring	\$ 10.0	Cancel Program
C-5 Cuts	\$ 2.4	Retire 15 C-5As
V-22 Restructuring	\$ 7.9	Cancel program in 2016 at 363 units
B-1B Cuts	\$ 4.0	Cut all B-1B aircraft (approximately 66 aircraft)
NAVAL		
Aircraft Carrier Cuts	\$ 21.0	Reduce CVN fleet to 8 Carriers (16,800 sailors included)
Amphibious Ship Cuts	\$ 13.0	Cancel 2 LHA-6 ships and 3 new LSD
Submarine Cuts	\$ 25.0	Hold procurement to 10 ships (19 ships planned)
Cruiser Cuts	\$ 6.6	Cut 12 Ticonderoga Class Cruisers
LCS Cuts	\$ 14.2	End LCS program in 2013 after 12 ships (55 planned)

Figure 6: Cuts to U.S. Forces and Procurements Savings Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp,

Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 21)

¹⁷⁹ Government Accounting Office, *Air Force Bombers: Options to Retire or Restructure the Force Would Reduce Planned Spending* (September 1996): 59-65. The exact cost savings associated with eliminating the B-1B bomber is difficult to measure. The cost savings in this study are based on estimates found in this GAO report as well as informal estimates generated by the B-1 Program Elements Monitor (PEM).

¹⁸⁰ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 36. General Duncan McNabb, Testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Seapower (July 13, 2011). The Air Force is required by Congress to maintain at least 316 airlift aircraft. Procurement of the C-17 exceeded the Air Force's requirement by 43 aircraft. There is room to eliminate 15 older C-5A aircraft.

¹⁸¹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 36. CNAS estimates are based on Congressional Budget Office, *Policy Options for Unmanned Aircraft Systems* (June 2011): 13. This plan would eliminate the Navy's MQ-4C Broadband Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS).

cooperate to mitigate potential vulnerabilities. While the United States would maintain a powerful air component despite these cuts, its edge over peer competitors would be reduced substantially.

Ground Forces. The Army and Marine Corps would take the most significant cuts. Active duty army end strength would shrink to about 430,000 soldiers, largely by eliminating non-combat personnel and expensive heavy equipment.¹⁸² The Marine Corps would be slimmed down to about 150,000 active duty personnel.¹⁸³ Cuts would largely come from the elimination or reduction of traditional capabilities such as tank units, amphibious assault vehicles, and fixed wing close air support assets. The Marines would focus on being an expeditionary light infantry force deployed abroad by naval vessels for crisis response. Any capacity associated with “sustained combat” would be eliminated.

These changes would make the U.S. Army and Marine Corps unable to engage in sustained, large-scale, high-intensity warfare.¹⁸⁴ Rapid response/forcible entry missions would replace the current focus on counterinsurgency and force-on-force ground wars. Before deploying the Army or the Marine Corps, policy makers would have to consider the reduced capabilities of U.S. ground forces to operate against a competent near-peer competitor.¹⁸⁵

Department of Defense. Beyond the military cuts delineated above, an isolationist strategy would also reduce defense wide expenditures. 150,000 DoD personnel would be cut, saving \$73 billion over ten years. Like selective engagement, missile defense programs would be also be substantially cut. Research and development expenditures, commercial activities spending, and intelligence programs would be cut to 15% below FY11 spending numbers until 2021.¹⁸⁶ Clearly these cuts would have an impact on military R&D and intelligence capabilities, but it would save close to \$300 billion.¹⁸⁷ When these DoD savings are combined with the substantial force structure

¹⁸² Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 21. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁸³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 22. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁸⁴ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁸⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 20-22. For additional information, see appendix (36).

¹⁸⁶ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 41.

¹⁸⁷ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 41.

cuts outlined above, cost savings could run as high as \$800 billion over the next decade.¹⁸⁸

FY 2012-2021	SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	COOPERATIVE SECURITY	NEO-ISOLATIONISM
DoD Activities			
Base Support	\$ 19.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 26.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 39.0 (15% below FY11)
Depots	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4
DoD Civilian Cuts	\$ 36.7 (75,000 people)	\$ 48.9 (100,000 people)	\$ 73.3 (150,000 people)
DoD Retail (exchanges)	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1
Headquarters Contractors	\$ 10.2	\$ 15.3	\$ 25.5
Intelligence	\$ 53.1 (10% below FY11)	\$ 70.8 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 106.2 (15% below FY11)
Joint Explosive Device Org	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (Shut down)
Missile Defense	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5
Commercial Activities	\$ 40.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 53.9 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 80.9 (15% below FY11)
Misc. Procurement	\$ 23.6 (10% below FY11)	\$ 31.5 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 47.2 (15% below FY11)
Research and Development	\$ 56.2 (10% below FY11)	\$ 75.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 112.5 (15% below FY11)
TOTAL	\$ 294.0	\$ 375.6	\$538.8

Figure 7: DoD Activities Reduction Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 39-41.)

Summary

Isolationism clearly represents the severest form of retrenchment. However it is predicated on sound geostrategic logic instead of an obsession with waning power. While it has not been a popular alternative to primacy, isolationism combined with offshore balancing could represent a way to defend America's core interest in light of diminishing resources. After all, in the not so distant past, isolationism was considered the preferred American grand strategy. However, the world has changed since isolationists held sway in American foreign policy. Today's world is much more connected politically, economically, and socially. International and regional organizations have become an important part of global politics. The dynamics of globalization have fundamentally changed the way people live, communicate, and interact. Since the end of the Cold War, this new environment has led to the rise of "cooperative security" as an alternative to selective engagement, primacy, or isolationism.

¹⁸⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 41.

CHAPTER 4

Cooperative Security Strategy

The final retrenchment option is “cooperative security.” Like “primacy,” cooperative security requires a global commitment to stopping aggression before it spreads.¹ However, unlike “primacy,” which depends on hegemonic power to *maintain the status quo*, “cooperative security” *promotes stability* through international institutions such as the United Nations (UN).² Where global institutions are weak or unable to effectively stop aggression, regional institutions including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Arab League, the African Union, or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can apply coercive measures including diplomatic pressure or even military coercion in the case of NATO.³ “A cooperative security strategy depends on international organizations to coordinate *collective action*. They are part of the complicated process of building sufficient credibility to convince all prospective aggressors that they will regularly be met with decisive countervailing power.”⁴

America’s National Interests

In its purest form, cooperative security does not necessarily require a stratified break-down of uniquely American “vital interests” within the international system. A focus on traditional “nationalistic” vital interests usually results in spontaneous power balancing between states.⁵ Instead of defining a narrow set of “national interests,” cooperative security advocates take a much broader view of security that emphasizes the dynamic nature of conflict mitigation and global peace.⁶

Minimize Conflict

First, cooperative security is fundamentally based on the premise that conflict and instability are *not* isolated occurrences.⁷ The nature of globalization has created an

¹ Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry, and John D. Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 7.

² Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 23.

³ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

⁴ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

⁵ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

⁶ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

⁷ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

environment where instability anywhere can metastasize into a regional or even a global breakdown in security.⁸ “The central purpose of cooperative security arrangements is to prevent war and to do so primarily by *preventing the means* for successful aggression from being assembled, thus also obviating the need for states so threatened to make their own counterpreparations.”⁹ The idea is to break the cycle of conflict and preempt aggressive actions. “International institutions, particularly the United Nations, are to play a critical role in coordinating the deterrence and defeat of aggression.”¹⁰

Maintain Peace

Second, proponents of cooperative security are inclined to believe that “peace is effectively indivisible.”¹¹ In other words, peace is an absolute commodity globally, not a relative concept for a few wealthy states. Like a stone being dropped into a pond, any threat to peace can cause “ripples” that expand well beyond the initial impact point. “Cooperative security, therefore, begins with an expansive conception of U.S. interests: the United States has a huge national interest in *world peace*.”¹² While the notion of “world peace” sounds utopian, the idea is logical from the standpoint that it places a premium on conflict mitigation, humanitarian assistance, democratization, and absolute gains. All of these ideas are important pillars in traditional western liberal ideology.

“Making War on a Map”—Using Cooperative Security

If a “cooperative engagement” strategist were to sit down in front of a map, several major issues would require immediate attention. First, this strategist would look at the numerous conflicts being waged across the globe. Some of these conflicts would be political uprisings and small insurgencies; others would be larger conventional wars.

The recent political uprisings in North Africa and the Levant would be of particular concern. The unfinished revolutions in Libya, Syria, and Egypt have the potential to infect other countries across Africa and Southern Asia. While the idea of “democracy on the move” is attractive, most states “moving” from authoritarianism to democracy face significant hurdles. In addition, these conflicts can have an impact

⁸ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

⁹ Carter, Perry, and Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, 7.

¹⁰ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 23.

¹¹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 21.

¹² Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 21.

beyond their borders. Syria provides an excellent example. As the Syrian government continues to clamp down on political dissidents, a certain amount of regional “collateral damage” should be expected. Besides the humanitarian implications associated with refugees and injured civilians, there are also regional security concerns due to regional instability. Countries such as Israel and Iran have a vested interest in the outcome of Syria’s internal conflict. There are also transnational terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas that are active in the region. These different security concerns have the potential to export violence and suffering beyond the borders of Syria. The conflict in Syria presents real security challenges across the greater Middle East. While the United Nations has had trouble building consensus, the Arab League has been active in negotiating with the Syrian regime. A proponent of cooperative security would continue to lean on these institutions and the leverage that they can apply. Any move towards unilateral military action would only complicate the situation. However, an operation similar to the NATO mission in Libya may be acceptable if consensus can be reached.

In addition to the ongoing political upheavals highlighted above, there are also ethnic and religious conflicts, including those in Sudan and Iraq, that warrant attention. Genocide, depravity, and widespread political dissatisfaction can lead to a larger regional conflict. Weak states may require international observers, peacekeeping forces, disaster recovery, or economic assistance to reinforce failing institutions and thwart widespread violence. Placing an international peacekeeping force or humanitarian mission under the auspices of the United Nation is an attractive alternative compared to the recent pitfalls associated with unilateral nation building and preemptive military intervention in Iraq. While the success of these operations has sometimes been brought into question, they have been widely used in volatile areas such as Kosovo, Lebanon, and Somalia with varying degrees of success.

Beyond small wars, terrorism, genocide, and political revolutions, a cooperative engagement strategist would also highlight the importance of curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and thwarting the ambitions of aggressive states such as Korea and Iran. Using “Operation Desert Storm” as a model, cooperative engagement would utilize international institutions such as the UN to lend legitimacy to military operations and economic sanctions. The current fear over Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons

program has convinced many in the international community to initiate restrictive economic sanctions, while leveraging the legitimacy of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to assess Iran's weapons program. While sanctions and inspections have broad support, any attempt to move from diplomacy to military action would require a far deeper level of commitment. While broad consensus in international bodies is hard to achieve, when it does happen, it lends an air of legality to interstate warfare.

Finally, what about the rising great powers that concern proponents of primacy and selective engagement? Cooperative security strategists would point out that most of the great powers have democratic institutions and present no direct threat to the U.S. Europe is a traditional ally of the United States and Brazil and India are both democracies that make better partners than enemies. While oligarchic power in China and Russia is troubling, the best way to "confront" them is not through military pressure or some form of "neo-containment," but through economic and diplomatic engagement. While disagreements and conflicts of interest will inevitably emerge, these disagreements are best handled diplomatically.

While all of the security concerns emphasized above seem disconnected, they all inherently have the latent potential to cause a wider conflict. Although security concerns run the gamut from armed revolutionaries in Africa to the development of a nuclear weapon in the Middle East, they all represent an acute threat to peace. A cooperative engagement strategist would be quick to point out that despite the fact that almost none of these groups or states pose a "direct threat" to the existence of the United States, they all represent a threat to international peace and regional stability. Thus, they pose an indirect threat to American prosperity and security. Working within the bounds of international and regional institutions is the best way to stop aggression and perpetuate.

Theoretical Basis of Cooperative Security

Unlike *primacy*, *selective engagement*, and *isolationism*, which are all grounded in realist ideology, cooperative security enthusiasts tend to gravitate towards liberalism.¹³ While liberal ideology is not *uniquely* American, it certainly plays a prominent role in American values and political culture. "Serious challenges to realism only arose when

¹³ Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997), 22. "Cooperative security is the only strategic alternative that is informed by liberalism rather than realism."

anomalies appeared between its presuppositions and patterns of action in the world. The anomalies that were noticed in the United States were, not surprisingly, those that liberals could easily recognize, including the increasing salience of *economic interdependence* and the apparent tendency of *democracies to behave differently* in foreign policy than authoritarian states.”¹⁴ In fact, there are three major differences between the realist ideas that frame the previous grand strategies and the liberal ideas that frame cooperative security.

The first major difference is how each international relations theory approaches the nature and consequences of *anarchy*. “Although no one denies that the international system is anarchical in some sense, there is disagreement as to what this means and why it matters.”¹⁵ In general, liberals tend to believe that international relations are not necessarily characterized by conflict and war.¹⁶ Interdependence and cooperation are possible because the aims of states, like the individuals that live in them, goes beyond the “realist” obsession with security.¹⁷ While realist scholars would tend to believe that liberals underestimate the importance of survival, liberals would point out that realists tend to neglect the possibility of widespread interdependence and cooperation within the bounds of anarchy.

This leads to the second major difference. Instead of the realist assertion that all states are “like units,” liberals believe that *states are inherently “different units”* that fall along a diverse spectrum that includes democracies, autocracies, oligarchies, and totalitarian states.¹⁸ While some states will inevitably pose a threat to security, many “like minded” liberal states present an opportunity for *military collaboration* and mutually beneficial *economic cooperation*. Realists see opportunities for “balancing” emerging powers through alliances, but no amount of institutional cooperation changes

¹⁴ Robert O. Keohane, “Institutionalist Theory, Realist Challenge,” in *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, edited by David A Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 271.

¹⁵ David A Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 5.

¹⁶ Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 209.

¹⁷ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 211.

¹⁸ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 211.

the dangerous security environment characterized by anarchy.¹⁹ Where realists see danger, liberals see opportunities.

Finally, while it would be unfair to say that liberalism is *only* concerned with “absolute gains” and realism is *exclusively* committed to “relative gains,” there is an undeniable association.²⁰ Kenneth Waltz, a leading realist academic, states, “When faced with the possibility of cooperating for mutual gain, states that feel insecure must ask how the gain will be divided. They are compelled to ask not ‘will both of us gain?’ but ‘who will gain more.’”²¹ Even if both states benefit (absolute gains), states are still driven to assess exactly *how* the other state will utilize its new found capability.²² Liberals are more likely to believe that a focus on relative gains will stifle cooperation and perpetuate the security dilemma between states. Instead of pursuing relative gains, liberal theory puts a premium on absolute gains and cooperation between like-minded states. While the line between absolute and relative gains is not always definitive, it is still an important dividing line for international relations theorists.

Based on these factors, cooperative security is firmly within the bounds of liberalism. Its approach to international cooperation, the nature of anarchy, and its focus on absolute gains make it fundamentally different than the other grand strategies. Instead of a focus on “U.S. vital interests,” “American prosperity,” and “insular security,” cooperative engagement approaches the world with a much broader set of interests. But how would U.S. power be utilized if this strategy were to be adopted?

Instruments of Power

Besides the use of military power to deter or stop aggression, a cooperative security strategy would also focus on diplomatic and economic leverage. However, much like the exercise of military power, the other instruments of power would often be wielded through international institutions or as part of a broader mandate.

A diplomatic mission can be a useful way to defuse a potential crisis. The Arab League’s recent mission to meet with Syria’s President Assad highlights a good attempt despite the fact that it fell short. However, since the end of the Cold War, state envoys

¹⁹ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 209.

²⁰ Baldwin, *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, 5.

²¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1979), 105.

²² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 105.

have sometimes interceded to mediate conflicts under the auspices of an international mandate.²³ This method has become more prevalent with the end of the Cold War and the increasing relevance of small wars and internal conflicts.²⁴ “The outcome is the emergence of a mediation system that rests primarily on mid-level powers, small coalitions of states and organizations, and sometimes use of “Friends” groupings that linked these coalitions with the UN.”²⁵ Norway’s role in brokering the Oslo accords and Brazil’s attempt to find a solution to the Iranian nuclear dilemma are a few good examples.²⁶ Part of an American cooperative security strategy would include an active diplomatic initiative that would not only facilitate an end to conflicts (Dayton Accords), but would also be part of a larger international mission to *preempt* conflict through active and ongoing mediation.

Economic leverage is another alternative to military intervention. Money can be used as either a *positive force* or a *negative force*.²⁷ As a positive force, it can be used to support humanitarian efforts that help mitigate the underlying causes of conflict. The United States currently invests about \$2.5 billion in humanitarian efforts every year.²⁸ This is greater than the next four state donors combined.²⁹ Ironically, despite the massive amount of money invested in humanitarian missions, the United States has thus far ceded a leadership role in shaping international humanitarian institutions.³⁰ The United States

²³ Bruce D. Jones, Shepard Forman, and Richard Gowan, ed., *Cooperating For Peace and Security* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12-13.

²⁴ Jones, Forman, and Gowan, *Cooperating For Peace and Security*, 12-13.

²⁵ Teresa Whitfield, “New Arrangements for Peace Negotiation” in *Cooperating For Peace and Security*, edited by Bruce D. Jones, Shepard Forman, and Richard Gowan (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 230-231. Whitfield defines a “Friend” grouping as an assembly of like-minded states with a demonstrated interest in reaching a negotiated settlement to a conflict, but without a direct stake in the outcome. This type of grouping has been used by the Secretary-General of the UN to counterweight the power of the United States and the Security Council in general. An example of this was the UN sponsored peace negotiations to end the conflict in El Salvador. The “Friends” of the Secretary-General were Colombia, Mexico, Spain, and Venezuela. The group brought credibility and neutrality to the negotiations. Both the United States and Cuba had too much of a stake in the outcome to be neutral negotiators. The U.S. became involved only after the process was underway.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 70-79. Nye believes that “perceptions affect how sanctions are experienced. He leverages the work of David Baldwin who highlights several different “negative” and “positive” examples of economic leverage.

²⁸ Abby Stoddard, “Aiding War’s Victims in a Shifting Strategic Environment” in *Cooperating For Peace and Security*, edited by Bruce D. Jones, Shepard Forman, and Richard Gowan (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 256.

²⁹ Stoddard, “Aiding War’s Victims,” 256.

³⁰ Stoddard, “Aiding War’s Victims,” 256.

has been much more involved politically in molding the Bretton Woods multilateral economic development institutions than humanitarian efforts.³¹ Cooperative security strategists would see this form of public diplomacy as *vital* to maintaining peace and prosperity. The assistance rendered after the 2010 flood in Pakistan and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami helped maintain a tolerable level of civility and probably prevented humanitarian disasters. Investing in these endeavors through international institutions such as the UN is an effective way to shortcut widespread dissatisfaction and prevent suffering and conflict.

Sanctions are the negative side of economic leverage and can include freezing assets, initiating arms embargoes, enforcing travel restrictions, or suspending aid payments.³² While the effectiveness of sanctions can be debated, they certainly send a message.³³ There is, however, the danger that international sanctions can have unforeseen adverse effects on the citizens of a country rather than on its leadership.³⁴ Examples include the sanctions on Cuba and the 1990s sanctions on Iraq. However, the “symbolic value” of sanctions can be significant.³⁵ South Africa and Libya provide compelling case studies. Joseph Nye points out that, “Some observers believe that the main effort of anti-apartheid sanctions that eventually led to majority rule in South Africa in 1994 lay not in the *economic effects*, but in the *sense of isolation and doubts about legitimacy* that developed in the ruling white minority.”³⁶ In Libya, UN sanctions probably contributed to the government’s reversal on weapons of mass destruction due to the *political cost* more than the *economic cost* of resistance.³⁷ While the utility of

³¹ Stoddard, “Aiding War’s Victims,” 256.

³² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 71. David Baldwin lists seven separate examples of “negative trade sanctions.” Also see: Gary Clyde Hufbauer et al, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered* (Washington D.C.: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2007) for a detailed discussion of sanctions and their effects.

³³ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 72-73. Some pundits have highlighted the fact that sanctions very rarely work, with one study revealing that sanctions were only effective in 5 out of 115 cases studied between 1950-1990. Others have claimed that they are “moderately effective.” Nye points out that, “Like all forms of power, efforts to wield economic sanctions depend upon the context, purposes, and skill in converting resources into desired behavior.”

³⁴ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 74. Sanctions can be used to target the leadership of a country. Nye points out that the use of sanctions brought North Korea back to the negotiations table in 2007. Recent efforts have included “targeted” sanctions against the ruling elite.

³⁵ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 75.

³⁶ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 75.

³⁷ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 75.

economic sanctions can be rightly debated, they are certainly more cost effective than military intervention.³⁸ When they are exercised through an international institution and broadly accepted, they can apply a significant amount of political and economic pressure on an aggressive state.

Force Structure

If cooperative security became the new grand strategy of the United States, developing an appropriate military force structure could be difficult. “A true cooperative security strategy could involve the United States in several simultaneous military actions.”³⁹ However, as a “retrenchment strategy,” it would certainly be smaller than the force structures required for “primacy” or “selective engagement.” Nevertheless, the military would need to be large enough to engage in small conflicts and peacekeeping missions on a “global scale” despite international assistance. As Barry Posen and Andrew Ross point out in their article “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” “At least initially, the United States would have to provide disproportionate military power to launch a global cooperative security regime.”⁴⁰ This requires a well-balanced force capable of deploying world-wide. The cooperative security force structure “preserves the ability of the U.S. military to deter and defeat adversaries while further *reducing redundancy* throughout the force, *promoting more interdependence* among the services, *diminishing single service self-reliance*, and reducing or *eliminating lower-priority capabilities and weapons systems*.”⁴¹ While the U.S. military presence may

		COOPERATIVE SECURITY	
ARMY			
Total Personnel	460,000		
BCTs	30	HEAVY INFANTRY	6
		STRIKER	8
AIR FORCES			
USAF Fighter Wings		13	
USAF Bomb Wings		3	
USN Carrier Air Wings		8	
NAVY			
CVN	9 CVN		
CG	16 CG		
DDG	72 DDG		
LCS	27 LCS		
SSN	45 SSN		
MARINE CORPS			
Total Personnel	162,000		
Regiments	6		

Figure 8: Possible Force Structures

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 18)

³⁸ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 73. Nye highlights the fact that “military power is sometimes more effective, but its cost may be so high that it is less effective.”

³⁹ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 28.

⁴⁰ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 28.

⁴¹ Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 17. For Additional information, see appendix (33-45). Many of the numbers

shrink in some regions such as Europe, it will maintain the capability to deploy forces from for contingency operations that span the spectrum of conflict for limited durations. While U.S. forces will inevitably be involved in small wars and peacekeeping operations worldwide, they will not be alone.

Naval Forces. Under this force structure, the United States Navy would continue to be the most powerful navy in the world. Nevertheless, some significant cuts would be made. “Policymakers might partially offset these reductions through forward basing, crew rotation, longer times at sea and redeploying additional assets from lower-priority areas.”⁴² Any gaps in traditional maritime coverage would be maintained by regional allies.

While the cooperative security force structure would only call for nine active aircraft carriers,⁴³ it would maintain a significant number of cruisers, destroyers, and about half of the initially planned littoral combat ships to sustain a *moderate* global presence.⁴⁴ In addition, the Navy’s amphibious Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESGs) would hold renewed importance for power projection.⁴⁵ While there are those that argue that amphibious forces should be reduced, these ships provide essential capabilities during humanitarian operations. “LHA(R)s and LHDs⁴⁶ have large flight decks and hangar decks for embarking and operating helicopters and tilt-rotor aircraft. LHA(R)s and LHDs also provide medical capabilities: With six operating rooms, 17 intensive care unit beds and 60 overflow beds, LHDs have the greatest medical capability of any

in this analysis are based on the research done by CNAS. The following force structure largely follows the recommendations presented in this report.

⁴² Barno, Bensahel, Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19.

⁴³ Barno, Bensahel, Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 34-35. The numbers presented here are based on the USS George Washington being laid-up for refueling and overall in 2016. Decommissioning the aircraft carrier, would save close to \$7 billion. This study estimates that eliminating 2 aircraft carriers would save approximately \$14 billion. Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Reducing the Deficit: Spending and Revenue Options* (March 2011): 90-91.

⁴⁴ Barno, Bensahel, Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. For Additional information, see appendix (34-35). Like the previous scenarios, cost savings are based on Department of the Navy FY 2012 budget estimates and Joseph R. McDonald, “An Analysis of CG-47 Cruiser Class Operating and Support Costs Trends and Cost Relationship With Platform Age,” Naval Postgraduate School (June 2011): 14-15. LCS cuts are based on the Navy’s FY12 budget estimates; and Ronald O’Rourke, *Navy Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Program; Background, Issues, and Options for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research service, April 29, 2011).

⁴⁵ Barno, Bensahel, Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. CNAS points out that the elimination of amphibious capabilities might reduce the U.S. Navy’s ability to conduct humanitarian missions.

⁴⁶ LHAs and LHDs are Amphibious Assault Ships that resemble small aircraft carriers. They usually have a contingent of U.S. Marines aboard along with helicopters and VSTOL aircraft.

amphibious platform in operation.”⁴⁷ Preserving these capabilities is important in an international environment where peacekeeping and humanitarian missions are the focus.

While amphibious forces would be spared, cuts would reduce weapons systems with limited utility such as submarines.⁴⁸ Submarines are certainly essential against near-peer competitors such as China and Russia, but they have limited utility in global policing actions. Ultimately, under this grand strategy, the Navy would continue to fight piracy, provide humanitarian assistance, show American resolve, and maintain a potent strike capability. In addition, a greater premium would be put on international naval cooperation.

The strategic model for this new employment strategy would be the “1000 ship navy” concept.⁴⁹ In 2007, Chief of Naval Operations Michael Mullen proposed a plan to integrate naval forces from around the world into what he called the “1000 ship navy.” The idea was to extend the reach of maritime forces while reducing the reaction time of naval units on a global scale.⁵⁰ The Honolulu Advisor ran an op-ed article by Admiral Mullen outlining the plan. In the article, Mullen explains that, “It’s not actually about having 1,000 international ships at sea. It’s more about capabilities such as speed, agility, and adaptability. Everyone brings what they can, when they can, for however long they can. We saw this idea in action during international relief efforts in our own country after Hurricane Katrina struck. And we saw it most recently in the eastern Mediterranean, where nearly 170 ships representing 17 nations came together to evacuate their citizens from Lebanon during the Israeli-Hezbollah war.”⁵¹ Humanitarian disasters assistance and non-combatant evacuation operations are a few examples where *timely* international naval cooperation would be critical in filling gaps in maritime coverage. While this force structure is certainly smaller, a concept like the one outlined by Mullen

⁴⁷ Robert W. Button et al., *Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) Capability Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), xi.

⁴⁸ Barno, Bensahel, Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. For Additional information, see appendix (34-35).

⁴⁹ Admiral Michael Mullen, “We Can’t Do It Alone,” *Honolulu Advisor*, 29 October 2006.

⁵⁰ Admiral Michael Mullen, “We Can’t Do It Alone.”

⁵¹ Admiral Michael Mullen, “We Can’t Do It Alone.”

provides a broader base of international resources to accomplish a wide array of mission sets.⁵²

Air Power. Despite reductions, both Naval Aviation and the Air Force would maintain a technological advantage over most adversaries across the globe. First, the cooperative security force structure would take a middle road on the F-35 project.⁵³ While more units would be purchased, fewer 4th generation aircraft would be bought to offset the reduced buy.⁵⁴ The result would be a smaller inventory, potentially requiring the elimination of some units (either active or national guard). Nevertheless, unlike the force structure outlined for isolationism, all three services would get their respective version of the F-35 (including 150 F-35Bs for the Marine Corps).⁵⁵ The F-35B would embark on the LHAs and LHDs highlighted above.

Like the other two strategies, cuts would be made to the C-5 program as well as the V-22 Osprey.⁵⁶ These cuts would save millions of dollars without sacrificing substantial capabilities. In addition, the B-1B

FY 2012-2021		COOPERATIVE SECURITY
GROUND		
Ground Force Cuts	\$ 63.8	Reduce forces to 460,000 Soldiers and 162,000 Marines
Ground Combat Vehicle	\$ 7.0	Wait until 2021 for fielding and reinvest in Bradley
Joint Light Tactical Vehicle	\$ 10.9	Cancel Program
JTRS Mobile Radio	\$ 15.0	Cut By to 11,030 (86, 956 planned)
AIR		
F-35 JSF Restructuring	\$ 25.0	850 F-35A, 150 F-35B, and 330 F-35C, no additional buys
MQ-4 BAMS Restructuring	\$ 10.0	Cancel Program
C-5 Cuts	\$ 2.4	Retire 15 C-5As
V-22 Restructuring	\$ 7.9	Cancel program in 2016 at 363 units
B-1B Cuts	\$ 4.0	Cut all B-1B aircraft (approximately 66 aircraft)
NAVAL		
Aircraft Carrier Cuts	\$ 14.0	Reduce CVN fleet to 9 Carriers (10,200 sailors included)
Amphibious Ship Cuts	\$ -.-	Maintain current amphibious capability
Submarine Cuts	\$ 25.0	Hold procurement to 10 ships (19 ships planned)
Cruiser Cuts	\$ 3.3	Cut 6 Ticonderoga Class Cruisers
LCS Cuts	\$ 7.0	End LCS program in 2013 after 27 ships (55 planned)

Figure 9: Cuts to U.S. Forces and Procurements Savings Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 18)

⁵² Colin Clark, "Land Forces Will Fade, Naval Rise," *DoD Buzz: Online Defense and Acquisitions Journal*, 13 October 2010, <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2010/10/13/land-forces-will-fade-navy-rise/>. In October, 2010, Admiral Gary Roughead outlined a follow-on plan to the "1000 ship concept" that would further integrate maritime forces with NGOs, international organizations/groups, as well as other countries not necessarily considered "traditional allies" of the United States.

⁵³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17. For Additional information, see appendix (36).

⁵⁴ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17. For Additional information, see appendix (36).

⁵⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17. For Additional information, see appendix (36).

⁵⁶ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 36.

bomber would be totally eliminated from the inventory due to its high maintenance costs.⁵⁷ Its role would be assumed by more reliable F-15Es, B-52s and B-2s. Finally, the navy's Broad Area Surveillance Systems (BAMS) would be eliminated saving close to \$10 billion.⁵⁸

Ground Forces. Ground forces would be reduced; however some armor and artillery would be maintained for unexpected contingencies.⁵⁹ Under this plan, when the mission in Afghanistan ends in 2014, Army and Marine Corps personnel would drop to 460,000 and 162,500 respectively.⁶⁰ Although, as mentioned above, some heavy capabilities would remain in the active duty force, much of it would transfer to the Army National Guard or reserve component. The same cuts that were made in the previous two force structures to the joint light tactical vehicle, the ground combat vehicle, and the new JTRS radio set would also apply to this scenario as well.⁶¹

The smaller, lighter ground forces would be trained and equipped to handle a broad array of missions. They would be ideally suited for expeditionary operations, foreign internal defense, peacekeeping missions, and larger scale coalition operations against medium-sized regional powers such as Iran, North Korea, or Syria. The ground forces in this force structure would be poorly suited for sustained high intensity combat against a near-peer competitor. While the Army and Marine Corps could potentially sustain several smaller forces in several countries for a *short time*, a sustained regional conflict would quickly test the limits of this structure.

Department of Defense. Finally, the Department of Defense bureaucracy would sustain deep cuts. Approximately 100,000 DoD personnel would be cut saving close to \$50 billion.⁶² In addition, intelligence spending, research and development, and base support would be held to 12.5% below FY11 budget numbers until 2021.⁶³ While these

⁵⁷ Government Accounting Office, *Air Force Bombers: Options to Retire or Restructure the Force Would Reduce Planned Spending* (September 1996): 59-65. The exact cost savings associated with eliminating the B-1B bomber is difficult to measure. The cost savings in this study are based on estimates found in this GAO report and informal estimates by the B-1 Program Elements Monitor (PEM).

⁵⁸ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 19. For Additional information, see appendix (36).

⁵⁹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17.

⁶⁰ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 17. For Additional information, see appendix (37).

⁶¹ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 37. CNAS uses a wide variety of sources for these estimates including the CBO.

⁶² Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 40.

⁶³ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 40.

cuts are not nearly as severe as the isolationism force structure, they would still have a significant impact on military operations and further procurements. Like the other two scenarios, missile defense would also be substantially reduced.⁶⁴ When all of the associated DoD savings are added together, they account for over \$375 billion in savings over ten years.⁶⁵

FY 2012-2021	SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	COOPERATIVE SECURITY	NEO-ISOLATIONISM
DoD Activities			
Base Support	\$ 19.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 26.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 39.0 (15% below FY11)
Depots	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4	\$ 6.4
DoD Civilian Cuts	\$ 36.7 (75,000 people)	\$ 48.9 (100,000 people)	\$ 73.3 (150,000 people)
DoD Retail (exchanges)	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.1
Headquarters Contractors	\$ 10.2	\$ 15.3	\$ 25.5
Intelligence	\$ 53.1 (10% below FY11)	\$ 70.8 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 106.2 (15% below FY11)
Joint Explosive Device Org	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (shut down)	\$ 1.2 (Shut down)
Missile Defense	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5	\$ 37.5
Commercial Activities	\$ 40.5 (10% below FY11)	\$ 53.9 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 80.9 (15% below FY11)
Misc. Procurement	\$ 23.6 (10% below FY11)	\$ 31.5 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 47.2 (15% below FY11)
Research and Development	\$ 56.2 (10% below FY11)	\$ 75.0 (12.5% below FY11)	\$ 112.5 (15% below FY11)
TOTAL	\$ 294.0	\$ 375.6	\$538.8

Figure 10: DoD Activities Reduction Summary in Billions

(Adapted from Lieutenant General David W. Barno, USA (Ret.), Dr. Nora Bensahel, and Travis Sharp, *Hard Choices: Responsible Defense in an Age of Austerity*, Center for a New American Security Report (Washington D.C.: CNAS, October 2011), 39-41.)

Summary

Cooperative security is an attractive option to those that view the world through a liberal lens. While the theories that underlie cooperative security seem sound, they do come with significant risk. Perhaps the most pressing limitation is the difficulty associated with building broad international consensus among fiercely independent states.⁶⁶ “There will always be defectors and free riders.”⁶⁷ This is especially true for democracies.⁶⁸ Collective action, while ideal in theory, is much harder to achieve in practice. Neoconservatives often highlight the ineptitude, indecision, and inefficiencies associated with cooperative action through international institutions. To some statesman

⁶⁴ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 40.

⁶⁵ Barno, Bensahel, and Sharp, *Hard Choices*, 40.

⁶⁶ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 29.

⁶⁷ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 28-30.

⁶⁸ Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 29. Posen and Ross point out that “democracies are problematical partners in a cooperative security project in a crucial respect: their publics must be persuaded to go to war.”

and policy makers, any infringement on sovereignty is a risk unto itself. Nevertheless, there are examples where cooperation has been an effective way to wield power.



CHAPTER 5

Conclusion: Grand Strategy and Retrenchment

“To be successful the strategist must *comprehend the nature of the strategic environment* and *construct strategy that is consistent with it*, neither denying its nature nor capitulating to other actors or to chance.”¹ Today, the world is moving away from the hegemonic configuration that followed the Cold War towards a more diverse international environment that includes a wide variety of rising regional powers, non-state actors, and international institutions. These changes should come as no surprise. “The strategic environment functions as a self-organizing complex system. It seeks to maintain its current relative equilibrium, or to find a new acceptable balance.”² Here is where we find Gilpin’s cycle of hegemonic rise and fall.³ From a multipolar configuration rises a power greater than the rest. “Once a society reaches the limits of its expansion, it has great difficulty in maintaining its position and arresting its eventual decline.”⁴ Both internal and external factors begin to erode the relative power advantage of the hegemonic power. “The diffusion of its economic, technological, or organizational skills undercut its comparative advantage over other societies, especially those at the periphery of the system.”⁵ Regional rivals, who enjoy lower costs, greater rates of return, and the economic advantages of rapid industrialization and urbanization, rise to challenge the status quo.⁶ Usually conflict emerges and the system falls out of balance until a new configuration of states emerges. Today, this process is beginning to play out between the United States and rising regional powers. In the wake of a global economic crisis, military overextension, and a changing international environment, the United States finds itself at strategic crossroads. Although it is politically unattractive, it is time to consider “retrenchment options” to prevent conflict and maintain U.S. vital interests globally.

¹ Harry R. Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 28.

² Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional*, 27.

³ Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 210.

⁴ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 185.

⁵ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 185.

⁶ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, 185.

Strategic Option

Retrenchment is not the end of American power and influence. However, it does call for a fundamental review of America's strategic interests abroad. It is no longer possible to define international "interests" from a position of "primacy." The costs are simply too great. As China, Russia, India, Brazil, and the European Union continue to grow and consolidate regional spheres of influence, it will be beyond the means of the United States to police the world unilaterally and maintain overwhelming military and economic superiority in every contingency on every continent. It simply requires too many resources. However, there are a variety of ways to retrench to a more defensible position.

	SELECTIVE ENGAGEMENT	NEO-ISOLATIONISM	COOPERATIVE SECURITY
Theoretical Basis	<i>Hybrid Realism/Liberalism</i>	<i>Defensive Realism</i>	<i>Liberalism</i>
World Order	<i>Balance of Power</i>	<i>Offshore Balancing</i>	<i>Interdependence</i>
Overarching interest	<i>National Security</i>	<i>Domestic Prosperity</i>	<i>Conflict Mitigation / Peace</i>
Geographic Focus	<i>Eurasian Continent</i>	<i>North America</i>	<i>Global</i>
Use of Force	<i>Preserve Vital Interests</i>	<i>Self Defense</i>	<i>Multilateral Action</i>
Great-Power Conflict	<i>Possible</i>	<i>Highly Unlikely</i>	<i>Highly Unlikely</i>
Regional Conflict	<i>Contain / Balance</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Intervene</i>
Ethnic Conflict	<i>Conditionally Intervene</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Intervene</i>
Humanitarian Efforts	<i>Conditionally Intervene</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Intervene</i>

Figure 11: Grand Strategy Summary

(Adapted from Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 4.)

The figure above summarizes the different strategic options presented in this paper. While each option approaches the world differently, they all represent a strategy predicated on "retrenchment." While analyzing different "strategic options" can help shape the debate about America's role in the world, none of them are likely to be implemented exclusively. Perhaps the best way to view these different options is through specific policy prescriptions that incorporate one or more of the ideas highlighted in the analysis. In other words, taking a specific "strategic option" and applying it universally

is impossible, however, it is possible to take certain “ideas” and apply them regionally to preserve resources, mitigate conflict, and secure vital national security interests.

Policy Prescriptions

The practitioner and the academic have two different jobs. An academic usually works within the parameters of a given field to strengthen the case for their unique theories. For example, realist scholars rarely suddenly decide to meld their idea of international relations with the fundamental tenets of liberalism or constructivism. Incongruences and problems are defined and solved within the bounds of the preexisting theory. Scientists who work within a given field of study will work to find solutions and devise reason through the existing paradigm.⁷ While similarities between different theories or schools of thought are not unheard of, total *syncretic thought* is rare. Building syncretic or even synthetic theories tend to dilute the original field’s basic hypothesis of how the world functions.

A practitioner on the other hand must be more dynamic. Instead of being wedded to pure orthodoxy, the strategist must utilize different ideas and theories as “lenses” to investigate and understand the environment. This study has provided a menu of options based on preexisting notions about the nature of the international system and American interests abroad. While no single strategy necessarily accounts for every variable in international relations, the options presented in this analysis do provide policy makers with a wide variety of ways to view a world in flux.

Throughout the course of the next several pages, several different retrenchment policy prescriptions will be explored. In some situations, the tenets of *cooperative security* will be utilized, while in other theaters, aspects of *isolationism* and *selective engagement* will be highlighted. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore every possible policy option, but there are a few critical areas that require consideration. First, “great power war” will be explored with a focus on China. The second section will look briefly at regional contingencies and small wars. Next, a new strategy to thwart terrorism

⁷ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

will be explored. Finally, this analysis will conclude with a brief look at domestic politics and its effects on grand strategy.

Great Power War and the Rise of China. Of all of the rising regional powers, China has by far the most potential to upend the status quo and challenge American power abroad. For the last two decades, China has maintained explosive economic growth and development. It recovered quickly from the 2008 economic collapse that continues to plague western economics.⁸ Linear projections predict that the Chinese economy will eclipse the U.S. economy by 2027.⁹ Some experts have even estimated that by 2040, China will account for 40 percent of the world's GDP.¹⁰ The influx of money will continue to allow China to invest in its military capability. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy has been modernized and continues to develop into a force capable of projecting power throughout the region.¹¹ The Air Force and Army have also evolved into modern fighting forces. Leveraging lessons learned by U.S. and NATO operations in the Middle East, Southern Europe, and North Africa, China has moved from a predominantly Soviet-type strategy predicated on "quantity over quality," to a technologically modern force capable of projecting limited power beyond China's traditional sphere of interest.¹² Although Chinese defense spending is still a fraction of what the U.S. spends, some forecasts project the Chinese defense budget to exceed U.S. spending by 2035.¹³

⁸ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 178.

⁹ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 178. Linear projections can be dangerous. Nye reminds his readers on page 164 that using linear projections led many experts to prematurely elevate Japan to a regional superpower. Two decades later we know that these linear projections were incorrect. In dealing with China, it is important to temper any statistical forecast with a pragmatic understanding that conditions can change. For example, if China were to experience some form of political collapse or economic recession, it would change the calculus.

¹⁰ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 178.

¹¹ In the last decade, China has developed a variety of advanced air defense destroyers, modern frigates, and highly capable amphibious ships. China also recently sent its first aircraft carrier, *Shi Lang*, out for sea trials.

¹² "The Dragon's New Teeth," *The Economist*, 7-13 April 2012, 27-32. The article highlights how Chinese military leadership studied the "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) after the Gulf War. The conclusion that they came to was that their Soviet style doctrine had to be updated.

¹³ "The Dragon's New Teeth," *The Economist*, 27. While the United States is planning \$500 billion in defense cuts over the next decade, the Chinese military is steadily increasing its defense spending.

China's emergence on the global scene has been received with cautious optimism in regional capitals, but its motives are not entirely understood. Its economic power and growing military potential bring a tremendous amount of influence to an area well aware of the recent decline in American soft power. Throughout the course of the last decade, U.S. policy makers have debated the best way to approach China in the wake of two deeply unpopular wars and a world-wide recession. Taking an over-militant stance could make conflict a "self-fulfilling prophecy" by creating a security dilemma. However, ignoring China's growing military power and economic influence could be equally destabilizing. Despite the "binary approach" many policy makers have used, there are other options available which deserve a fair hearing.

The "China problem" creates a unique conundrum without an exact historical parallel. The 20th Century rise of the United States in the shadow of the British Empire represents a compelling, but inconclusive example of how a rising power can peacefully grow within a "hegemonically configured" system of states. However the dynamics were significantly different. Cultural affinity and shared political values probably had a lot to do with how the dominant power of the time, the British Empire, handled a rising United States. In addition, by the early 1900s, the United States had already consolidated power in the Western Hemisphere and the British had the Germans to worry about.¹⁴ The case is different in the 21st Century Pacific Rim. The United States has economic interests throughout Asia (including China) as well as long standing defense agreements with the Japanese and South Koreans. Any military conflict would have catastrophic consequences on not just Asian economies, but on economies across the globe. Considering the political constraints, how should the United States approach China?

Today's strategy seems to be based on some form of "neo-containment," which would probably appeal to the "realist side" of *selective engagement* enthusiasts.¹⁵ The

¹⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001), 246-247. Mearsheimer argues that throughout the 19th Century the U.S. was an expansionist state that quickly consolidated its power in the Western Hemisphere through "Manifest Destiny" and the "Monroe Doctrine."

¹⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 400. In 2001, Mearsheimer made the argument that if China continued to grow economically and militarily, it would force the United States to implement a

January 2011 Strategic Guidance states, “The United States will continue to *make the necessary investments* to ensure that we *maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely* in keeping with our treaty obligations and international law.”¹⁶ American forces have shifted from the North Atlantic and Europe (the central theaters of the Cold War) to the Pacific Ocean and Asia. This makes sense to those that see peace and stability on the Eurasian landmass as a “vital” U.S. interest. The United States is the guarantor of Asian security through long standing agreements with several nations in the region. While a regional “neo-containment” strategy may be a relatively safe move, other options are worth considering. For example, in place of a containment policy led by the United States, perhaps some sort of Asian-based alliance would be better able to counterbalance a rising China more effectively and safely. This is philosophically in line with an *isolationist strategy* predicated on pulling U.S. forces back to prevent miscalculations, overreactions, and overextension. In other words, instead of *reactively injecting* more American forces into the Pacific to “guarantee” Asian peace and prosperity, it may be more effective to actually *withdraw forces* and pull out or minimize the role of mutual defense agreements with traditional allies.

This strategy would include changing the Japanese constitution in order to allow them to build a more potent offensive force structure independent of the United States.¹⁷ Another move might be to pull U.S. forces out of South Korea. Isolationists would argue that the United States spends billions of dollars annually subsidizing security requirements for countries that have the economic and technological capabilities to support their own defense needs.¹⁸ Forcing Japan to counterbalance China, and South Korea to defend its own DMZ would allow a much lighter U.S. footprint to pull back to more defensible

containment strategy. That is exactly what appears to be happening. U.S. forces have continued to migrate into the Pacific to thwart Chinese ambitions and send a message to regional allies.

¹⁶ Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, January 2012. After the end of the war in Iraq, it appears that the Obama administration is rebalancing forces from the Atlantic and Middle East into the Pacific.

¹⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 399. Mearsheimer warns against “substituting Japan for the United States” in any regional balance. The legacy of World War II has hurt Japan’s reputation regionally.

¹⁸ The opposite side of that argument is that the United States is a benevolent pacifier that uses carefully metered military and diplomatic power to pacify traditional rivals such as Japan and China. While this argument makes sense, it requires a massive expenditure of resources. The author is suggesting that a regional balance is the best option when resources are no longer available to maintain “primacy.”

positions in Guam, Australia, Hawaii, and Alaska. Without overt American military power, states would be forced to pay for their own defense needs and establish regional alliances to offset the rise of China thereby removing the U.S. from the equation. This “Asian alliance” would probably be composed of some combination of Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines.¹⁹ While these states do not necessarily agree on everything, the rise of a regional hegemon has a way of uniting competing factions.²⁰ It certainly worked in Europe. There was a time when an alliance between Germany, France, and Britain seemed unlikely, but now it is accepted as the norm. Japan would become the centerpiece of this new balancing alliance against China, despite long standing regional misgivings about its past.²¹ India’s growing influence on China’s southern flank could also be a factor depending on how China decides to assert itself in the region after the U.S. pulls back.²²

While the United States would cease to be the *primary* or *unilateral balancer* against China, it would still maintain a presence in the Pacific. Instead of being the “hegemonic power” containing the “rising regional power” on behalf of “free-riding” allies, it would become the “*holder*” of a new balance.²³ Much like the “*balancer*” influence that Britain held on Continental Europe for centuries, the United States would

¹⁹ This alliance would not be a “neo-SEATO” organization. Unlike SEATO, which was composed of western states with colonial interests in Asia, the new Asian alliance would be composed exclusively of Asian states. While the United States may play an informal advisory role, it would not be a voting member of the council.

²⁰ Thomas J. Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), pp. 81–126. Thomas highlights the fact that Asian countries have a high degree of economic interdependence. This interdependence may be a mitigating factor that prevents large scale regional conflict.

²¹ Christensen, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?” 81-126. Like Mearsheimer, Christensen believes that further empowering Japan could have negative regional consequences. However, he does highlight how in the late-1990s the Clinton administration (under the Nye Initiative) pushed Japan to take on more responsibility for its own defense needs. Continuing to give Japan more and more autonomy without completely pulling-out of the mutual defense agreement might be an acceptable compromise.

²² India recently launched a new ICBM ostensibly to demonstrate that it has the capability to strike targets in China. This would appear to signify recognition among Indian military and political leaders that the countries security sphere extends beyond its traditional rivalry with Pakistan.

²³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, NY: Alfred A Knoph, Inc., 1973), 193. Morgenthau brilliantly dissects the idea of the “holder” of the balance. However, later in the book he argues that the “balancer” is no longer applicable due to the potent capabilities of modern naval and airpower. I would argue that in political terms, the idea of a “holder” of the balance is still a viable theory that can be applied to restrain regional hegemons from an insular position.

exercise its influence selectively to prevent or mitigate conflict.²⁴ In other words, if China grew beyond the means of the Asian Alliance to contain it, the United States could add its weight as part of a greater coalition in order to maintain the status quo or halt Chinese ambitions.

Forcing regional actors to balance each other is not a new concept.²⁵ The United States has traditionally supported regional power balancing in the Middle East. For two decades, Iraq provided the regional balance to Iran. Today, with Iraq significantly weakened, Saudi Arabia is being built up as a counterweight to Iran. Pulling large numbers of military forces out of Asia and Europe would certainly represent a drastic policy change, but it may take pressure off of the bilateral U.S.-China relationship and reduce American commitments abroad. This may seem strange and counterintuitive now, but this policy could gain traction around 2030, if linear projections about China's economic and military growth come to fruition.

However, this strategy could also have significant risks including the potential for more instability if the vacuum left by American power leads to land grabs in the South China Sea or an openly hostile great power rivalry develops between Japan and China. It could also result in states gravitating towards a "benevolent China" instead of a Japanese centered alliance. However, despite the unknowns, it should at least be considered in light of not only the growing tension between Washington and Beijing, but also as a regional retrenchment option. Continually spending resources to "contain" a rising China only leads to subsidizing Asian security, overreacting to expected Chinese growth, and potentially even overextending economically and militarily. The United States needs to seek ways to mitigate these concerns between now and 2040. "Offshore balancing" in the Pacific represents a good alternative to "neo-containment."

Regional Contingencies and Small Wars. A much more likely scenario than the "great power conflict" analyzed above is a regional conflict against weak or failing states in Africa, South America, or Southern Asia. These operations might include contingency

²⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 261. Mearsheimer highlights British grand strategy from 1792-1990 as an example of effective offshore balancing.

²⁵ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 261. The British used this strategy for centuries to influence Continental Europe but the roots of this strategy stretch back to the ancient Greeks.

operations, peacekeeping missions, foreign internal defense, and some form of hybrid war. Mitigating these conflicts through international cooperation represents the best way to prevent political overreactions and military overextensions.

The recent operation against Libya and the current multilateral approach to the Iranian problem present examples of what these kinds of operations might look like in the future. The coalition mission against Iraq in 1991 is another good example. The antithesis of this type of operation would be Operation Iraqi Freedom. Broad coalitions based on preexisting military alliances (NATO) or regional institutions (The African Union or Arab League) would play the primary diplomatic and military role rather than the United States acting unilaterally or with a narrow “coalition of the willing.” These operations would likely be part of a larger UN mandate, however if Security Council gridlock prevents consensus, broad coalition warfare under the auspices of a *regional mandate* may be possible. Comparing the neoconservative adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan with the recent operation in Libya presents a stark contrast. While it is debatable whether the United States would have played a larger role in Libya if preexisting commitments in Afghanistan did not limit its force availability, it seems reasonable to believe that in the future, European nations may take more joint responsibility for North Africa and the Levant. Using NATO as a tool for collective action is an effective way to share responsibilities, bolster legitimacy, and reduce costs.

However, it would be in the best interest of the United States to reduce its military footprint on the European continent and force the alliance to develop a broader range of capabilities to prevent overdependence on U.S. forces. Although Operations Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, and Unified Protector have been broadly regarded as “successful,” they have highlighted the fact that NATO military capabilities and political will still require U.S. power. This leads to overreliance of unique American military capabilities and leadership. The fact that Europe could not act without U.S. assistance in Southeastern Europe (Kosovo/Bosnia) and North Africa (Libya) without American diplomatic and military leadership demonstrates the fact that the alliance still has a ways to go before it can take the lead on complex operations. However, despite the inevitable

friction that accompanies coalition warfare, it usually prevents the overextension that comes with unilateral action and it collectively distributes cost while adding legitimacy.

Today, North Korea, Syria, and Iran represent significant foreign policy challenges. Acting unilaterally in these cases could draw the U.S. into a quagmire similar to Iraq. Working within the bounds of international institutions will help maintain legitimacy and keep resources in line with policy goals.

A New Strategy to Thwart Terrorism. Since the attacks on 9/11, the United States has relied on a strategy heavily influenced by “expeditionary anti-terrorism operations” to thwart threats beyond American shores.²⁶ “Although titled the ‘National Strategy for Combating Terrorism’ the U.S. response to Al Qaeda did not amount to a strategy; it was more accurately a concept of operations. In its opening pages it depicted an adversary that was essentially kinetic and territorial, which existed in tangible hard-wired structures.”²⁷ Today, it is widely accepted that Al Qaeda is much more networked than initially thought. After recent adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, it has become clear that fighting a “global war against terrorism” predicated on overseas expeditions, regime change, nation building, and kinetic military intervention is not sustainable. In fact, it may play into hands of those that wish to hasten the demise of the United States as a world power.²⁸

Terrorism is decidedly more international, dynamic, and multidimensional than initially thought.²⁹ However, no one should be surprised by how the United States initially prosecuted the “war on terrorism.”³⁰ As the world hegemon, the United States simultaneously led the effort against terrorism in multiple theaters including the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia, and Southern Asia. Military missions in Somalia,

²⁶ John MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to bin Laden* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), 171.

²⁷ MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 173.

²⁸ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 141.

²⁹ MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 144-150. Terrorism and insurgency have moved from being geographically isolated occurrences to global movements with far-flung interest groups and intricate communications networks.

³⁰ MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 167-192. MacKinlay argues that NATO and the United States mischaracterized modern insurgency and terrorist movements. They did not recognize that terrorism had evolved and an “expeditionary” response may not be the ideal strategy.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq were mirrored by financial and diplomatic efforts across the globe. Despite overwhelming victories on the “battlefield” and an initially sympathetic international community, the United States bogged down and became mired in counterinsurgency operations of dubious political utility. After a “global strategy” based on “primacy” and the subsequent overextension that often accompanies overreaction, it is time for a new strategy to fight terrorism. This strategy would utilize a more “selective” methodology to mitigate the threat of terrorism *without overreacting*.

The Bush Doctrine is a bankrupt concept that leads to involvement in places where the U.S. has few “vital interests.” “Selective engagement” enthusiasts would question the utility of spending money on sustained combat operations to stop increasingly scattered terrorist groups in regions where the United States has few interests. Shedding the U.S. military commitment in Iraq was a good start towards a new strategy. The next step is pulling out of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is not critical to U.S. security in the 21st Century.³¹ If the best that can be expected in Afghanistan is a “Pakistan-light” then pulling out sooner rather than later would be ideal. However, pundits will inevitably ask if it is possible to leave Afghanistan and still prevent terrorist elements from returning?

While there is much debate over this question, a few points deserve consideration. First, according to the Afghanistan Study Group, it seems unlikely that terrorists will return.³² Second, policy makers should consider leaving a smaller CIA/military footprint in Afghanistan for training Afghan forces, running decapitation strikes against leadership targets, and organizing regional counterterrorism operations.³³ This would be a relatively

³¹ The Afghanistan Study Group, “A New Way Forward: Rethinking U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan,” www.afghanistanstudygroup.org. The Afghanistan Study Group is composed of academics and policy makers who advocate for a new strategy in Southern Asia. They highlight the following fact: “With the Afghanistan Surge, the U.S. will be spending almost \$100 billion per year in Afghanistan, with a stated primary purpose of eradicating just 20 to 30 Al Qaeda leaders, and in a country whose total GDP is only \$14 billion per annum. This is a serious imbalance of expenses to benefit.” Afghanistan is not sustainable at these rates.

³² The Afghanistan Study Group, “A New Way Forward.” The Afghanistan Study Group believes that Al Qaeda will probably stay out of Afghanistan. They also support a smaller U.S. footprint in Afghanistan.

³³ The Afghanistan Study Group, “A New Way Forward.” The Afghanistan Study Group believes that “Special forces, intelligence assets, and other U.S. capabilities should continue to seek out and target known Al Qaeda cells in the region.” This smaller footprint would reduce costs relative to gains. A similar idea was allegedly advocated by Vice President Joe Biden and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff James Cartwright. This plan was sometimes referred to as the “Hybrid Plan” or “Counterterrorism Plus.”

cheap insurance policy when compared to holding ground as part of a traditional counterinsurgency campaign. Finally, the Soviet Union might have left a tenable solution to the power vacuum problem that will inevitably emerge when U.S. forces leave. From 1989-1991, the Soviet-trained Afghan Army performed admirably against mujahedeen elements left over after the Red Army evacuated. However, after the 1991 demise of the Soviet Union, funds soon ran dry and the Afghan Army collapsed in the face of opposition. While only a small window in time, it provides some hope that with the proper funding, Afghans can provide some level of security against terrorist elements.³⁴

Pakistan provides an even more difficult terrorist threat. After decades of U.S. funding, Pakistan is still a problem that money cannot fix. After pulling out of Afghanistan, conditional “carrot and stick” military aid payments and a more regional approach to terrorism may be more effective. A closer U. S. relationship with India may be at least part of the solution to containing the terrorist problem in Pakistan. This will call for a more nuanced diplomatic approach in Southern Asia. However, becoming more involved militarily in South Asia would be a mistake.

As for a broader approach to “terrorism,” there are certainly alternatives to the primacy inspired “global war on terror.” In her book *How Terrorism Ends*, Audrey Cronin analyses how a wide variety of terrorist movements ended.³⁵ Surprisingly, many of the strategies that the United States has been using over the last decade including “decapitation” and “military repression” have historically been ineffective.³⁶ While recognizing that multiple variables play into any counter-terrorism operation, it is worth recognizing that terrorism itself has morphed over the course of the last decade. Instead of an isolated movement with a defined, hierarchical leadership structure, some groups have become international organizations that form loose confederations based on a

A full account of the plans can be found in: Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 235-238 & 159-160.

³⁴ “Plum Recruits,” *The Economist*, 6-12 August 2011, 34-35. Clearly this is easier said than done, but at least one expert noted that for the right price (\$6-8 billion per year), the Afghan Army can operate with an acceptable level of success to suppress terrorist elements and keep regional threats to the United States off balance.

³⁵ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 7-8.

³⁶ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 194. The effectiveness of different counterterrorism strategies is highly contextual. However, for organizations like Al Qaeda, military repression and decapitation have not eliminated the group.

common ideology.³⁷ Expeditionary operations, large scale military interventions, and nation-building missions will not defeat this type of networked organization. Between Iraq and Afghanistan, hundreds of “top lieutenants” have been killed by U.S. airstrikes and Special Operations missions. While these operations have kept terrorist organizations off balance, they do little to actually “eliminate” the organization as a whole.³⁸ Terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda have become “ideas” more than “centralized movements.” The organization morphed into the “name brand” for a greater overall ideology.³⁹ Simply introducing troops does not stop the “idea.” This begs the question: If expeditionary operations are only marginally effective, then what is the alternative?

Several options exist to fight terrorism short of invading weak and failing states. First, exploiting rifts between factions can divide terrorist organizations and make them easier to either placate or defeat.⁴⁰ For example, while Al Qaeda is active in both Yemen and Indonesia, the two groups clearly have differences that can be exploited by those familiar with the two geographic cells. Another option is to highlight mistakes that the terrorist organization makes.⁴¹ For instance, when Al Qaeda in Iraq started killing innocent men, women, and children, it presented an opportunity to confront their ideology and defeat it in the court of international and local public opinion.⁴² This requires effective public diplomacy and a credible strategic information campaign. Finally, by not overreacting to the threat, it can remove the draw of terrorist activities.⁴³ This should be the fundamental key to any strategy going forward. Instead of retaliating through overwhelming and sometimes damaging military force, it may be more effective to find non-military solutions or more precise kinetic ways to respond. Obviously this is difficult due to an almost overwhelming domestic demand for a military response in the wake of a terrorist attack.

³⁷ MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 160. MacKinlay refers to Al Qaeda as a “name brand” for a larger movement.

³⁸ Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, *Counterstrike* (New York, NY: Times Books, 2011), 241. Drone strikes are used to keep terrorist elements off balance and on alert.

³⁹ MacKinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 174.

⁴⁰ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 195.

⁴¹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 186.

⁴² Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 186.

⁴³ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 195. Cronin cautions political and military leadership to “stop overreacting to the myth of a ubiquitous threat.”

By sharing information on criminal networks, minimizing military overreaction, and challenging terrorist ideology through concerted strategic messaging, the United States can find ways to erode terrorism's legitimacy. Regime change, overwhelming military force, and occupation seems to perpetuate terrorist activities. It is time to minimize the U.S. footprint abroad and utilize a more discriminating strategy based on selectively engaging in kinetic counterterrorism operations. Holding large swaths of foreign territory for long periods of time only destroys American soft power abroad.

Domestic Policy and Grand Strategy. “Both policy and strategy are domestically grounded in *why something is undertaken* as well as *what is undertaken* and *how it is accomplished*.”⁴⁴ Throughout the course of the last two centuries domestic influences have played a formative role in how the United States approached the international community. Geography, individualism, democracy, religion, political partisanship, and social values have all shaped the way American policy makers have formulated grand strategy.⁴⁵ For much of the nineteenth century, the United States remained committed to a strategy predicated on strict isolationism. While this did not stop Americans from dominating the North American landmass and embarking on limited international expeditions, it did keep the young United States out of European conflicts.⁴⁶ This would change at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In their article, “Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal institutionalism in the United States,” Charles Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz point out that, “from the United States emergence as a great power at the end of the nineteenth century until the 1940s, its political class favored *power* or *cooperation*, but not the two together.”⁴⁷ On one end of the spectrum was Woodrow Wilson's “internationalism” and on the other end of the spectrum was Theodore Roosevelt's “imperialism.”⁴⁸ The significant deviations between different administrations were largely rooted in domestic political partisanship between

⁴⁴ Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional*, 86.

⁴⁵ Yarger, *Strategy and the National Security Professional*, 86-91.

⁴⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 242-252.

⁴⁷ Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, “Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Institutionalism in the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 7-44.

⁴⁸ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 10-11.

Republican and Democrat politicians.⁴⁹ World War II interrupted this American tendency to oscillate between extremes.⁵⁰ The war to defeat fascism, in addition to the looming ideological conflict against communism, created the impetus to build a strategy based on *sustained American leadership abroad*.⁵¹ This required bipartisan support for open markets, power projection, and international institutions.⁵² With a few small deviations, broad bipartisanship characterized American Cold War foreign policy from 1945-1991.⁵³ After the demise of the Soviet Union, bipartisan support for what was essentially a “liberal institutionalist” strategy began to breakdown.⁵⁴ The absence of a military and ideological competitor reopened the partisan debate over the best way to utilize U.S. power abroad.⁵⁵ Much like the first half of the twentieth century, domestic partisanship began to erode the bipartisan strategy that had dominated the latter half of the twentieth century.⁵⁶

These domestic problems, when coupled with economic setbacks, can be symptoms of an impending decline. Robert Gilpin points out that, “On one hand, decline is accompanied by *lack of social cooperation*, by emphasis on rights rather than emphasis on duty, and by decreasing productivity. On the other hand, the *frustration and pessimism* generated by this gloomy atmosphere *inhibits renewal and innovation*.”⁵⁷ Gilpin’s assessment accurately captures the mood in America in the wake of the war in Iraq and the 2008 economic collapse.

⁴⁹ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 10-11. Kupchan and Trubowitz point out how T. Roosevelt’s imperialist agenda “outstripped its political support” and how Wilson’s commitment to institutional cooperation was rejected by the Republicans in the Senate. The two parties often found themselves at odds over U.S. foreign policy.

⁵⁰ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 11-13. Due to a surge in bipartisanship during World War II, Franklin Roosevelt’s grand strategy to “couple power and partnership” in order to exercise American leadership in a post-war world became widely accepted. The growing threat ideological and military threat of the Soviet Union further solidified support.

⁵¹ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 11-13.

⁵² Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 10-15.

⁵³ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 12 & 24. Kupchan and Trubowitz highlight a few moments where “bipartisanship” waned slightly (Vietnam and Korea), but for the most part, bipartisanship remained strong throughout the Cold War.

⁵⁴ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 31-39.

⁵⁵ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 27. Kupchan and Trubowitz point out that, “Unipolarity provides a very different set of geopolitical and domestic incentives. The absence of a counterpoise to the United States has left U.S. power unchecked. During the 1990’s, unquestioned primacy and a sense of invulnerability that came with it weakened both sides of the compact between power and partnership.”

⁵⁶ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 27.

⁵⁷ Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center,” 27.

In order for the United States to create an enduring grand strategy, compromise and cooperation must trump partisanship.⁵⁸ However, if history is any guide, it seems likely that American grand strategy is destined to be a point of contention between policy makers until a near-peer competitor emerges to truly challenge the status-quo.⁵⁹ It seems probable that the first half of the twenty-first century will oscillate between "neoconservative adventurism" and "liberal institutionalism" on a 4-8 year cycle much like the first half of the twentieth century oscillated between "internationalism," "isolationism," and "imperialism."⁶⁰ Finding a bipartisan middle road based on a pragmatic retrenchment strategy is not impossible, but will be extremely difficult in the current environment. Nevertheless, an inability to bring resources in line with interests abroad will eventually have devastating consequences.

Concluding Thoughts: A Synthetic Approach

"Americans are prone to cycles of belief in their decline. Some see the American problem as imperial overstretch, some see it as relative decline caused by the rising of others, and some see it as a process of absolute decline or decay."⁶¹ This pessimism emerges from time to time throughout American history as a reaction to a variety of existential political developments.⁶² The launch of Sputnik, the Vietnam War, and the 1979 oil embargo were all moments where Americans perceived their nation to be in decline.⁶³ However, today's symptoms of decline are much more distinct. The international system is shifting and the United States is overextended. Economic problems and domestic political stagnation are impossible to ignore.

U.S. policy must evolve in order to keep resources in line with strategic goals. The next several decades will demand a new grand strategy. A refusal to recognize the shortcomings of "primacy" as a grand strategy will result in political overreaction and perpetuate economic and military overextension. The inevitable result will be a forced

⁵⁸ Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center," 42-43. The authors recognize the difficulty in finding bipartisanship among the gridlock, but advocate for a strategy predicated on "judicious retrenchment" and a more "discriminating" strategy predicated on selective engagement.

⁵⁹ Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center," 27.

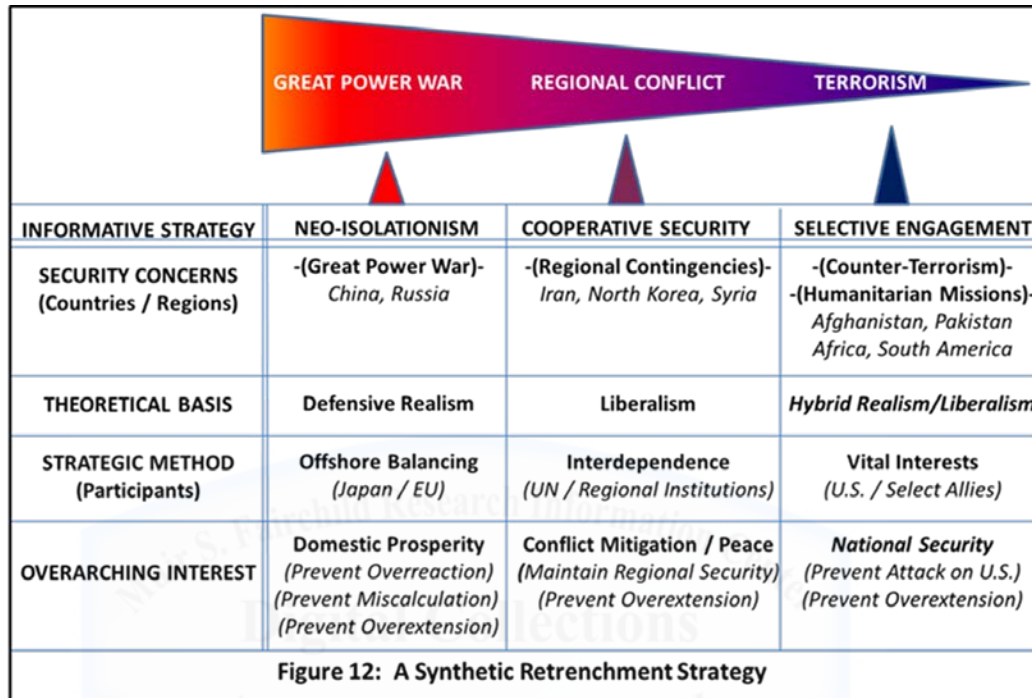
⁶⁰ Kupchan and Trubowitz, "Dead Center," 10-11.

⁶¹ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2007), 156.

⁶² Nye, *The Future of Power*, 156.

⁶³ Nye, *The Future of Power*, 156.

retrenchment. The United States must learn from past hegemonic powers and adjust foreign commitments in order to match limited resources. The chart below is a summary of the policy prescriptions outlined in this essay. By leveraging the relative nature of retrenchment, the United States can escape the demise of past great powers.



(Adapted from Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996/1997): 4.)

It is possible to mitigate conflict and reduce commitments through a combination of offshore balancing, cooperative security, and selective engagement. Certainly there are risks associated with these changes, but the risks associated with trying to maintain "primacy" in a world moving towards a multipolar configuration is greater. The rise of China and the continued economic and military growth of Russia, Brazil, and India will transform the way the international system looks in 25 years. The way the United States approached the world in 1995 should not be the way the United States approaches the world in 2025. It is time to start thinking about how to retrench to a position of strength.

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